DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 186 835 CG 014 433

AUTHOR Medick, Jean M.
TITLE Effective Classroom Strategies for Three Problem Behaviors: Hostile-Aggressive, Passive-Aggressive, and Withdrawn Failure-Image. Occasional Paper No. 30.
INSTITUTION Michigan State Univ., East Lansing. Inst. for Research on Teaching.
SPONS AGENCY National Inst. of Education (DHEW), Washington, D.C.
PUB DATE Dec 79
CONTRACT 400-76-0073
NOTE 213p.
AVAILABLE FROM Institute for Research on Teaching, College of Education, 252 Erickson Hall, Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI 48824 ($8.75)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC09 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Aggression; *Behavior Problems; Case Studies; Child Responsibility; Classroom Techniques; Emotional Disturbances; *Hostility; Intermediate Grades; *Problem Children; Program Descriptions; Self Concept; *Student Teacher Relationship; Teacher Role; *Withdrawal (Psychology)

ABSTRACT

This guide involves a synthesis of three inservice models (Glasser's Reality Therapy, Gordon's Teacher Effectiveness Training, and Focus) with the author's knowledge of and experiences with teaching to develop an effective classroom strategy for helping students. This guide concentrates on strategies for dealing with three problem behaviors: hostile-aggressive, passive-aggressive, and withdrawn failure image. Strategies include: (1) holding democratic classroom meetings to set up classroom rules, and consistently enforcing them; (2) establishing friendly, caring relationships; and (3) insisting that children "own" their problems. Children are viewed as individuals who are capable of solving their own problems, learning, and helping each other to learn. Each problem behavior is described with its causes and step-by-step plans for resolution. Several case studies are included. (Author/NRB)

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ED186835

Occasional Paper No. 30

EFFECTIVE CLASSROOM STRATEGIES FOR THREE PROBLEM BEHAVIORS: HOSTILE-AGGRESSIVE, PASSIVE-AGGRESSIVE, AND WITHDRAWN FAILURE-IMAGE

Jean M. Medick

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
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Published By

The Institute for Research on Teaching
252 Erickson Hall
Michigan State University
East Lansing, Michigan 48824

December 1979

CG 014433

Publication of this work is sponsored by the Institute for Research on Teaching, College of Education, Michigan State University. The Institute for Research on Teaching is funded primarily by the Program for Teaching and Instruction of the National Institute of Education, United States Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. The opinions expressed in this publications do not necessarily reflect the position, policy, or endorsement of the National Institute of Education. (Contract No. 400-76-0073)

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Abstract

The author synthesized three inservices (Glasser's Reality Therapy, Gordon's Teacher Effectiveness Training, and Focus) with her own knowledge of and experiences with teaching to develop an effective classroom strategy for helping all her students. In this book, she concentrates on strategies for dealing with hostile-aggressive, passive-aggressive, and withdrawn failure image behaviors. Her strategies include such things as holding democratic classroom meetings to set up classroom rules, consistent enforcement of those rules, establishing friendly caring relationships, and insisting that children "own" their own problems. Underlying her strategies is a respect for children as individuals who are capable of solving their own problems, learning, and helping each other to learn.

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Acknowledgements

During the school year 1976-77 I had the good fortune of working half-time as a teacher collaborator with the Institute for Research on Teaching (IRT) at Michigan State University in East Lansing. I am indebted to my fellow teacher-collaborators, members of the Michigan State University faculty who serve as IRT staff members, and IRT consultants not only for a stimulating and challenging experience but for helping me crystallize the ideas that became this book.

Specifically, I would like to acknowledge the contribution of Joyce Putnam, a teacher educator at IRT, and Barbara Diamond, a teacher-collaborator, who read the manuscript in its earliest stage and provided valuable criticism regarding structure, tone, and content, which were considered by both author and editor in the process of reworking the original material into this book. I also wish to thank Judith Lanier and Lee Shulman, co-directors of the IRT, for their support.

While at the IRT I worked as a team member on a research project called the Classroom Strategy Study under the direction and leadership of Jere E. Brophy, Professor of Teacher Education and Educational Psychology. The study is designed to gather useful information from and for elementary school teachers in coping with the behaviors of difficult students whose behaviors or academic progress are frustrating, worrisome, or very time-consuming. While working on the project I began to write case studies of difficult children I had taught which led to identification of and a written account of strategies I use with three types of problem behaviors; hostile-aggressive, passive-aggressive, and withdrawn failure-image. I am especially grateful to Jere Brophy for the time he generously spent discussing the manuscript, for his invaluable constructive criticism, and for his encouragement.

It took me five years to develop the strategies presented in this book. Prior to actually writing the manuscript I received invaluable assistance in formulating the strategies from numerous colleagues. I would especially like to thank David Groves and Kyle Euckert, Focus consultants, and my colleagues on the staff of the East Lansing Public Schools: Jackie Killingsworth,

Director of Library of Technical Services; June Land, teacher consultant; Edith Ireland, consultant; Michael Fink, elementary counselor; Warren Starr and Donald Kittilson, elementary principals, all of whom generously shared the wisdom of their experience and their expertise with me.

After the initial manuscript was written, my editor, Sandra Gross, skillfully and enthusiastically reorganized and edited it through the final draft. Her efforts made the material infinitely more clear, consistent, and ordered.

Effective Classroom Strategies for Three Problem Behaviors: Hostile-Aggressive, Passive-Aggressive, and Withdrawn Failure-Image

Jean M. Medick[1]

[1]Jean M. Medick, a former teacher collaborator with the Classroom Strategy Study, is a fifth-grade teacher with the East Lansing Public School District.

PART I

How I Developed My Strategies: Three Inservices

Where I Am and How I Got Here

I started teaching fifth grade in 1972. My efforts during this first year were almost exclusively devoted to learning and teaching the curriculum. During my second and particularly during my third year of teaching fourth and fifth graders, I began to turn my attention to certain types of behaviors that concerned me. These concerns encouraged me to do extensive reading and to participate in a variety of inservices in an attempt to understand these behaviors and their possible causes.

In the first part of the book I discuss three inservices of special significance because they aided me in developing an effective classroom strategy: William Glasser's (1975a) Reality Therapy and its use in schools, Thomas Gordon's (1974) Teacher Effectiveness Training Program, and Focus (Groves, Note 1), a preventive mental health program. I present an overview of each of these programs and relate the principles of each to my personal classroom experiences.

The overview of each program that I will present is selective, illustrating what I took with me from an inservice and incorporated into my classroom. Following each of the many inservices I've attended I have experienced a natural selection process that is closely related to my teaching style and the degree to which an idea excites me. The ideas with which I readily identified and which stuck in the forward part of my consciousness are far from the complete realm of ideas I was exposed to. But, they are ideas that survived the pressures of my existing classroom responsibilities and became part of what goes on within my room.

In the second part of the book, after a brief description of the community in which I teach and the way my classroom functions, I examine three types of student behavior that cause me the most concern and the strategies I've developed as an outgrowth of reading, inservices, and the practical experience of dealing with them. Following a general description of each type of behavior--hostile-aggressive (HA), passive-aggressive (PA), and withdrawn-failure image (WFI)--are several case

studies.

In the United States social change since the end of World War II has occurred at an unprecendented rate. Is it necessary, therefore, to do things differently in schools today than before 1950? William Glasser (1975) and Rudolph Dreikurs (1968) present some interesting reflections upon this question. William Glasser expresses the view that for thousands of years man was goal oriented. People were highly motivated to work for a variety of goals--good grades, a diploma, a job, a home, marriage and a family. In schools principals and teachers intimidated or coerced students to do as they were told because it worked. The message was, "If you don't do as we tell you, you won't succeed." Goal-oriented children did as they were told or at least appeared to try. In other words, authoritarian methods were effective in schools. They were also effective within the family structure.

After 1950, however, in the United States, a great change occurred. Young people began searching for a role which embodied factors related to the quality of life--a seeking for fulfillment and an appreciation of their own humanity and uniqueness. The young were saying they wanted more than a grade, a job, or security. They wanted recognition as persons. In America, then, young and old alike are searching for a role which supercedes or is at least equivalent in importance to goals.

Today children come to school looking for more than reading, writing, and arithmetic. They come seeking caring, happiness, fulfillment, entertainment, and pleasure. If these expectations are not met, they are often miserable. Many will not accept less. They will fight. In short, American school children today are different. They are motivated by their role. They seek recognition as persons. Authoritarian methods to produce compliance are no longer effective.

Rudolph Dreikurs (1968) sees the change in American children after World War II from a different perspective which compliments that of Glasser. He states that our society, prior to World War II, was democratic in its political philosophy but autocratic in its functioning. Within the major institutions--family, school, industry, and government--there were the rulers and those who submitted to them. The rulers, of course, held the power and made the rules. In classrooms teachers ruled. Their job was

to teach. The job of the students was to absorb the information imparted to them by the teachers. Generally, children accepted the notion that they came to school to learn. Those who questioned or rebelled against this notion usually responded when a little outside pressure was brought to bear and reapplied themselves to the task of learning.

Dreikurs also sees 1950 as the turning point when the submissive groups in our country began to rebel. Labor groups, minorities, women, and children began to demand their rights--particularly the right to dignity as a human being, the right to be treated with respect and to experience self-determination. No longer were they willing to accept second-class citizenship and submit to control and manipulation by the rulers. Thus, a turbulent evolution of true democracy began which reaches beyond a political philosophy to a way of life which encompasses all.

Many children today not only question but reject what they are taught in school. Many decide for themselves whether they will or will not learn. Force can no longer be used as an effective motivator in producing compliance. The generation gap between youth and adults is as old as civilization. Nonetheless, Dreikurs believes that it is the smoldering rebellion of youth against domination by adults that accounts for the increase in rebellion and defiance in schools.

My personal synthesis of both Glasser and Dreikurs follows. Both are explicating a shift from our pre-World War II society in which the goals were that of the group to which the individual either conformed or submitted either voluntarily or by force. As such the system was authoritarian, traditional, power based and goal oriented. After World War II the emphasis shifts to the individual, and his/her value and importance; hence, the concentration on the humanity of the individual, his/her role, feelings and worth, and the pursuit of social equality which overturns traditional authority.

I have been profoundly influenced by the thoughts and works of Glasser and Dreikurs. Their thoughts on how children have changed speak to and make sense out of my experience as a teacher and parent. When my children were very young, authoritarian methods were effective, but steadily declined in effectiveness after age 10 and on through the teens.

What I saw with my children and the 10 and 11 year olds I've taught for seven years was a new generation of children with new attitudes, values, and behaviors. Remembering well the way school children behaved in my generation and having taught in junior high school in 1953-54, I had a frame of reference. The differences in children's behaviors and attitudes twenty years ago and today are great. Many of the changes in behavior and attitude I perceive as healthy and good, but some caused me great concern. During 1974-75, my third year of teaching, I addressed these concerns in the following long memo to my principal:

Problems I see With Many Children That Cause Me Concern:

1. Much uncertainty with respect to themselves
2. Fighting--physical and verbal
3. Insensitivity to the feelings of others--so many children feel perfectly free to cut others down. When I ask them why they said a hurtful thing to someone for no apparent reason they answer, "I don't know." It's like a sport--something to do.
4. Lack of self-discipline
5. Inattentiveness, poor listening skills, inability to stick to a task or concentrate
6. An almost frightening disregard for property--the school's, others', their own
7. Stealing for quite a few seems to have lost its meaning. If you can take something and get away with it, it's okay.
8. They like to do interesting things but few are willing to assume responsibility for cleaning up or putting things away.
9. Many are willing to do what they like to do. That is all.
10. Constant socializing
11. Apathy, boredom, depression, withdrawal
12. A constant demand for their "rights" with little or no regard for the rights of others.

From working with children who are angry and fight a lot, are withdrawn, do little school work and care less, lack self-discipline, challenge everything, or socialize constantly; and through conferences with parents, I'm finding that the children are usually trying to cope with some big problems in their total lives such as:

a. divorce--either accomplished or in process

b. step-parents and step-siblings-tension at home. One very aggressive boy burst into tears one day and said "I don't want a third mother!"

c. single parent or both parents working and/or going to school. Children on their own a lot--suffering from lack of the kind of attention they need--will take any kind they can get at school.

d. Children from two-parent homes are sometimes in states of uncertainty and anxiety similar to kids whose parents have been or are going through a divorce. One child from a two-parent home confided tearfully after a nonproductive week in school, "I think my parents are going to get a divorce."

e. value clashes between parents and school or parents and society are coming out at conference time. A good number of parents are expressing their own anxieties about new roles they are exploring.

Parents come in to talk about concerns they have regarding their child's school progress and/or behavior but talk about their own problems instead: the crumbling values they were and sometimes are still committed to, lack of permanence or stability in many areas, marital problems, problems with their children, frustrations in their own role. Many parents are having a hard time coping and I see this reflected in the children.

All of these concerns go well beyond the written curriculum but the impact they have on children's ability to function effectively in school is tremendous.

I would like to do more for the children in the social-emotional or affective area. I want to augment my skills, which I know are presently insufficient, to accomplish the following:

1. Instill a sense of personal worth

2. Assist them in making value judgments that are right for them but do not impinge on the rights and needs of others.

3. Teach them techniques for problem-solving--their own and those involving themselves and others.

4. Involve them in decision making and help them learn to be responsible about their decisions.

5. Help them to be successful and self-reliant.

6. Develop interpersonal relationships and communication skills

7. Encourage them to develop their minds and senses to the fullest--not for grades or so they can go to college, get a job, or make money but for the pure, simple, lifelong excitement and joy of becoming the person they are meant to be.

Before detailing my principal's response to my memo I wish to briefly back up in time to clarify where I was personally in the process of changing my thinking, values, and methods of working with children. During the summer of 1972, following my first year of teaching, I attended the first of three significant inservices, Teacher Effectiveness Training (T.E.T.). In November 1973 I attended a conference on discipline conducted by William Glasser and later read his books *The Identity Society, Reality Therapy,* and *Schools Without Failure* (Galsser, 1975a; 1975b; 1975c). My awareness of new techniques and a more effective way of relating to and teaching today's children was emerging but at that point it lacked integration. I felt I was randomly snatching a little of this and a little of that as the need presented itself. Something was missing.

My principal shared the concerns expressed in my memo. He said that they were not unique to the children in my classroom. We went in search of a program that would address some of these needs and found the Focus Program (Groves, Note 1). During the summer of 1974 I began my fourth year of teaching. The Tri-County Mental Health Board in Lansing, Michigan, in conjunction with the East Lansing School District offered a voluntary 30 hour in-service on Focus--how to teach and incorporate skills into the curriculum for developing and maintaining mental and emotional health.

In March 1976, I spent a week at William Glasser's Institute for Reality Therapy.[2] Two years later I became a certified reality therapist. Reality Therapy, the principles of *Schools Without Failure* (Glasser, 1975c), and Glasser's discipline techniques underlie all the strategies discussed in this book.

My personal integration of the three significant inservices was a movement backwards from Glasser's attention to behavior (outward reaction to the environment) to fostering change of behavior through T.E.T.'s effective communication techniques and problem solving process (the bridge) to Focus which enables exploration of feelings (the understanding of the innerstate of self.)

With the Focus training came the completion and integration I had been seeking--the bits and pieces from previous inservices were supplemented and augmented by the Focus skills and all came together for me

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[2]Institute for Reality Therapy, 11633 San Vicente Blvd., Suite 107, Los Angeles, California 90046.

into a unified and complete method to help children understand themselves and others, learn to be responsible, communicate and solve problems effectively, and motivate them to learn in school.

Building upon Glasser's ideas as the base I've been able to incorporate the skills from Teacher Effectiveness Training and Focus to reach and teach the whole child--a thinking, feeling human being. The results have delighted me. I have witnessed children experiencing a release of personal energy, previously expended in nonproductive ways, that has given impetus to greater self-acceptance, vastly improved interpersonal relationships, self-confidence, awareness that an individual can exercise his rights only in the context of respect for the rights of others, and much improved--sometimes startling--academic achievement.

Over the years, as children have changed, the way we, as a nation, look at education has also changed. One of the significant changes since World War II is our dedication to providing 12 and sometimes 13 years of public education for all children. This was not the case before World War II. In addition, school is mandatory for our children through age 16 or 17. Earlier in this century there were other options - staying at home, working on the farm, learning a trade, or having other work experiences at an earlier age. In other words, if you were not making it in school there were other ways to find a productive place in society. The fact that all children must go to school places new responsibilities on the institution itself, especially in light of the increasing absence of the extended family and the influence it once exerted as well as the declining influence of church and religion. More so than ever before the nuclear family, itself in a state of great stress or disintegration, and school are the primary and sometimes only places where children can learn to be effective human beings.

Therefore, I do not believe that schools can, in all fairness to children, put the major, if not total, emphasis on teaching academic subjects and grading children against a set standard as was true in the past. Not many decades ago when most people were employed as unskilled laborers and a very small percentage prepared to enter professional or managerial occupations, schools provided a sorting function, selecting

those to go on for further education and pushing out those judged less educable. This sorting function, supported by the grading system, is archaic if we are committed to providing a quality education for all children and if we require them to attend school for at least a decade or more. Glasser makes the following point. A child who fails in school today considers himself a failure as a person. Therefore, I think we must look upon schools, not as institutions that sort and grade and classify but as institutions dedicated to teaching and learning for all. Those who fail in school turn on society and seek revenge. I ask myself, "What is the proper function of schooling?" I believe that it is to help people become better and more effective human beings and this requires attendance to the emotional and social aspects of the human being as well as the cognitive.

Louis J. Rubin, a professor of Education at the University of Illinois and head of The Communications Coalition for Educational Change in Washington, stresses the need for institutions of learning to recognize the emotional lives of children in the education process if we are to provide a quality education for all and cites the relationship between schooling and life:

> The child setting off on his first day of school embarks upon an experience that is a good deal more critical than he, or perhaps even his parents, suspect. In the course of his schooling--compelled by law for at least a decade—he will come to a lasting image of himself and a sense of the way he fits into his world. When the experience has concluded, it is almost a certainty that the memories stored in his psychic attic will continue to exert profound influence for the remainder of his life. Our school encounters are a powerful force in shaping the kinds of persons we think ourselves to be and in molding the underpinnings of the life choices we ultimately will make. Apart from the family circle, no other environment has a greater impact upon the child's conception of himself and his view of the social scenes in which he is involved. (Rubin, 1975, p. 3)

As a teacher I feel I have a moral obligation to help the children in my classroom grow toward becoming full human beings and to feel successful. Teaching cognitive skills is not enough. A child who can read, write, and do arithmetic but who is fearful and lonely, cannot resolve conflicts effectively, conforms or is hostile or withdrawn is not going

to be able to cope with the world satisfactorily much less find fulfillment or happiness in life. Working together with parents I believe I can help their children and my students develop competence in basic academic skills and grow emotionally to be open and friendly, accepting of themselves and others, feel loved and capable of loving, and be creatively involved with life. Through the skills I have learned from Glasser, T.E.T., and Focus I feel that I'm teaching skills to the children in my classes that will be useful and meaningful to them not only for the year or two they are with me, but perhaps for the rest of their lives.

The concepts inherent in Glasser's methods, T.E.T., and Focus represent a shift from an authoritarian, power based system which imposes its rules by force or intimidation to one which is based on respect for the child as an individual. They are process oriented and do not involve concepts of right and wrong, nor do they impose guilt nor involve a struggle of ego between the child and teacher. All are outgrowths of a new psychology based on the necessity for individuals to be responsible for their own behavior and the process of self-actualization. All are nonpunitive and address children from the position of their strengths, helping them learn to make good decisions regarding behavior, learning, and conflict resolution.

The underlying concept is the self-actualization of the child, a process in which he is a prime mover in his development, gaining strength from accepting and handling responsibility, learning to accept ownership of his own problems, acknowledging and identifying feelings, learning to solve problems, and eliminating inappropriate or self-defeating behaviors. Problem solving is a central theme. The goal is not the short-term solution of getting a child to stop doing something, to be quiet, to sit down and do as he is told, which only serves to mask and submerge a problem, but rather it is the long-term process of allowing a child to develop into a productive, effective, accepting, warm, and caring adult.

A major theme of all three inservices is the necessity of building up the child's ego or self-esteem and working through his strengths so that he perceives that he can succeed in school. The root cause of hostile-aggressive, passive-aggressive, and withdrawal failure-image behavior is low self-esteem. Punishment reduces self-esteem even further and produces feelings of anger. Building the child's ego by making him

feel worthy and loved is critical. Anger, as overtly expressed by a hostile-aggressive child and subtly expressed by the passive-aggressive child, seems to be the medium for conveying frustration to others. I say "seems to be" because Thomas Gordon comments that anger is often a secondary emotion expressed to cover a primary emotion such as fear, anxiety, depression, embarrassment, threat, and the like.

> Anger can be looked at as a posture or an "act," not a true emotion or feeling. Frequently, shortly after a person acts angry he may get very real physiological sensations--rapid heartbeat, trembling, etc. These physical manifestations may be reactions to the violence of his own behavior. In a sense a person can be said to manufacture his own internal reactions, which then feel like an emotion. (Gordon, 1974, p. 148).

With the WFI child anger is possibly extremely submerged.

In any event my concern regarding the behaviors of these three behavior types is not with the behaviors per se but with the fact that they prevent the child from applying his full energies to learning in school. A child has the ability to gain control over his own behavior, to be to a large degree captain of his own fate, and as a teacher I can help him do this. Once a child is controlling his own behavior he usually shows much greater motivation to do school work and to achieve. This release of energy for productive purposes comes about, though, only if the child feels cared about and believes that the work he does has worth. Therefore, feelings of failure must be prevented because this feeling is not limited to some fractional part of the child -- it is felt throughout his whole being resulting in his own conclusion, "If I'm a failure in school I'm a bad person."

I believe that elementary school teachers are the most important teachers a child has in his entire schooling. If they can keep a child believing in himself, believing he is a successful person through ages five to 10 or 11, they give him a good chance of feeling successful throughout life.

In learning and teaching skills which promote the self-actualization of children, I have realized personal self-actualization. The rewards are, therefore, much like those of loving--not only do you receive more, the

more you give, but you have more to give away. Also, I no longer find myself in win-lose power struggles with children to force compliance.

For the most part parents of the children I have taught have been very supportive in working with me with the new techniques. I restrict myself to dealing with children within the school situation, being very sensitive to avoid the invasion of a family's privacy. Often, if a child is having behavioral problems in school, a parent requests suggestions to implement at home and I do offer assistance to the best of my ability. I find that the no-lose problem-solving technique eliminates the implied or inferred blaming of parents and, therefore, the threatening situation that school itself is for some of them. If parents do not wish to cooperate when their child is having problems, I accept this and concentrate on doing what I can to help the child overcome the problems while he is in school.

Some of the material dealt with in this book has been presented in Michigan to teachers in East Lansing, Lansing, Waverly, and Benton Harbor and to a parent group in Holt. The overall reaction of praticipants was positive indicating that the problems were common and recognizable and the strategies useful. I hope the descriptions of the hostile-aggressive, passive-aggressive, and withdrawn failure-image child and the strategies that have worked for me will be relevant and helpful to my readers.

Chapter 1. Glasser Inservices: Reality Therapy, Schools Without Failure, and Discipline

Reality Therapy

In 1970 I heard Dr. William Glasser speak on Reality Therapy and the effect of school failure on the life of a child. This was a significant event in my life. I read Glasser's (1975a, 1975b, 1975c) books, *The Identity Society*, *Reality Therapy*, and *Schools Without Failure*, attended additional Glasser workshops, went to Los Angeles for a week of training at The Institute for Reality Therapy, and began to practice the principles and newly acquired ideas in my classroom.

The basic point of Reality Therapy is to teach a person to be responsible for his behavior and to gain self-discipline to pursue goals the attainment of which develops and furthers his belief that he is a successful person. Pursuing goals requires psychological strength. The latter is essential in dealing with the upsets and occasional failures, disappointments, and tragedies that all humans encounter. A person who basically believes he is successful possesses psychological strength and meets the setbacks and hurts of life rationally; he assesses what went wrong, generates options, makes a plan of action, and then moves on with his life.

Glasser states that a person gains psychological strength by progressing along four success pathways:

1. giving and receiving love (establishing and maintaining warm caring relationships with others)
2. achieving a sense of worth in one's own eyes and in the eyes of others (achieved by what we do)
3. having fun
4. becoming self-disciplined

The farther a person proceeds along these pathways, the more psychological strength he acquires. He feels strong and capable. Failure to proceed along these pathways drains a person's psychological strength, leaving him feeling weak and incapable, leading to a failure-identity. A person with a failure-identity makes poor choices in life, responding emotionally rather than rationally to life's challenges.

Some children give up on succeeding in school at a very early age. They reach a point where they say, "The heck with it." These children accept failure. Glasser believes that children who are unable to experience warm caring relationships with their teachers and peers and a satisfactory measure of academic success experience a lot of psychological pain. When they finally decide to give up, he believes they do so because they believe giving up will be less painful psychologically than continuing to try and continuing to fail.

Schools Without Failure

Glasser's plea to teachers, especially in elementary school is: Don't let children develop failure-identities in this vital area of their lives. Failure in school foreshadows failure in life. He believes that elementary school teachers are key people who can do much to help all children achieve a success-identity in school, by using the eight principles of Reality Therapy.

1. Get involved with students--be personal, warm, and friendly.
2. Deal only in the present, with what the child is doing now.
3. Work with students to help them make value judgments about their behavior.
4. If a student's behavior is detrimental to success, help him to make a plan to change his behavior.
5. Get a student to make a commitment to his plan with a verbal statement, a handshake, or in writing.
6. Accept no excuses if a student turns from his plan or breaks his commitment.
7. Inflict no punishment on the child, but do not interfere with the natural consequences of misbehavior. Just keep working with the child and his problem until change comes about.
8. Never give up. What this really means is hang in there longer than the child expects you to.

In the classroom, I do not worry about the children who succeed academically, have friends, get along with their teachers, and behave appropriately. It is those children who experience little success and recognition, have difficulty behaving appropriately and/or making friends, and are lonely and discouraged around whom my concerns center.

They are the failure-image children, and they elect one of two options to cope with classroom life--disruption or withdrawal. Practicing Reality Therapy in the classroom helps these children change their behavior to better meet their basic needs of love and worth.

Discipline

The eight principles of Reality Therapy can be translated into practice for a failure-image child who acts out through Glasser's ten-step discipline process. (A brochure detailing this process may be obtained from The Educator Training Center, 2140 West Olympic Boulevard, Suite 518, Los Angeles, California, 90006.) It works like this.

Discipline is a teaching process; it involves teaching children the value of following reasonable rules. If a child cannot follow reasonable rules, then teach him how as well as why it is to his benefit to do so. A discipline problem is defined as a child who makes it hard for others to learn and the teacher to teach.

Glasser's 10-Step Discipline Process

Step 1. Alone, in a quiet place, think about yourself and a child who is a discipline problem in your classroom. Ask yourself, "What am I routinely doing with this child?" Be honest.

Step 2. After analyzing what you have been doing with the disruptive child, ask yourself, "Are these things working?" If the answer is, "No," then make a commitment to stop what you have been doing.

Step 3. Examine your relationship with the disruptive child. How much time are you spending each day doing something pleasant with him? Make a small plan to do something every day with this student that is personal, friendly, and conveys the message, "I care about you." Be persistent with your daily little plans, even though a long time passes before your student responds favorably. Stay calm and courteous no matter how your student behaves.

Step 4. Assume you have done Steps 1, 2, and 3 -- especially 3 -- and then a disruption occurs. Issue a simple corrective or directive, such as, "Please stop it," or "Please be here on time" -- nothing more. Repeated use of Step 3 will improve the relationship between you and the student, and he may be more inclined to do what you request.

Step 5. If Step 4 doesn't work, then ask the student, "What are you doing?" and, "Is what you are doing against the rules?" The answer to these questions is obvious, but you are asking the child to evaluate his own behavior. If he denies doing anything, then tell him what you see him doing and state the rule he is breaking. You have put the responsibility where it belongs--on the child. Don't say anything more--just wait. If you have been using Steps 1, 2, and 3, the questions in Step 5 are very effective in stopping misbehavior.

Step 6. If the child doesn't stop misbehaving following Step 5, repeat the latter briefly. If this doesn't work, then tell the child firmly and courteously, "We've got to get together and work it out." You will then have to make time available with the student, at the moment or later in the day, to make a plan that will help him follow the rules. Encourage the child to come up with the plan, but help if necessary. The plan should be short-term, specific, possible, and involve some form of positive action more than "I'll stop it." Once the plan has been decided upon, get a commitment from the child to follow it--shake hands on it, verbalize it, or put it in writing and sign it. It is important in Step 6 to impress upon the child that the problem is going to be worked out.

If the plan is not working and the child disrupts again, accept no excuses. Ask the child, "When are you going to do what you agreed to do in your plan?" Find out what went wrong. If necessary, renegotiate the plan and get a commitment from the child to follow it.

Step 7. If disruption continues, go through Step 6 once or twice. If this doesn't solve the problem, then isolate the child at a time-out location in the room or, if necessary, in the office. The time-out location in the room should be a comfortable place--a large stuffed pillow for young children, the child's desk, or a chair at a table for older children. Say to the child, "I want you to sit here until you have a plan that will help you follow the rules or when you are ready to work out a plan with me." Allow the child to do his work, read, or draw during the time-out. However, while at the time-out spot, the child may not take part in the regular classroom activities. How long he chooses to be timed-out is entirely up to him. All you require is that he sit still, remain quiet, and think of a plan.

This is not punitive. You are being friendly and you are ready and willing to help him work out a plan to follow the rules. Responsibility for working it out is placed precisely where it belongs--with the child. It's his problem. You are not failing him, giving him zeros, or punishing him in any way.

If a youngster acts up in the time-out place in the room, then he is asked to sit in the office. Again, he is made comfortable, and the atmosphere is friendly. "Hello, John, please sit in this chair." You make it clear to John that he may do his work, read, or draw in the office, but he is not permitted to talk or bother anyone. If an elementary school child chooses to sit in the office all day, call his parents and let them know what you are doing and why. Ask them not to punish the child. Urge them to listen to the child if he chooses to talk about the problem, and then tell him that it's his problem and he'll have to work it out with you.

Step 8. Step 8 is in-school suspension. If the child acts up in the office, then he is referred immediately to the principal or school counselor. The basic idea is the same as in the time-out place. "We want you to be in class, but we expect you to follow the rules. As soon as you have a plan that will help you follow the rules, you may return to class. If you need help with your plan, I'll help you."

If help with the plan is requested, the principal or the counselor asks the child, "What did you do?" Then he asks, "What plan can you make that will help you do better?" Be prepared for lots of excuses and blaming of others, but be patient, even if it takes a day or two. Don't buy into the excuses or the blaming. Just keep patiently reminding the student that he cannot return to class until he has a plan to follow the rules. The student must be helped to understand that there are only two alternatives--return to class and follow the rules or continue to sit at the time-out place.

Step 9. If a student continues to misbehave in the in-school suspension situation, whether it be in the office, the principal's office, or the counselor's office, then he is declared out of control and his parents must be notified and asked to take him home. However, the principal tells the parents and the child, "Tomorrow is a new day.

We would like your child to be with us tomorrow so long as he or she maintains reasonable behavior. If behavior does not remain reasonable we will call you to take him or her home again."

When the child returns to school the following day, you go right back to Step 8 -- in-school suspension -- until the child makes a plan to follow the rules.

Step 10. If consistent use of Steps 1 through 9 does not work, then the child must stay home permanently or receive special help provided either by the school district or community agencies. There are some situations that are too severe to be handled by classroom teachers or schools.

The "don't give up" concept of Reality Therapy is important. What it means in reality is to hang in there longer than the child expects you to. Children who are behavior problems test me--they try to get me to accept excuses, yell at them, or put them down in order to confirm their failure identity.

When I first started using the discipline process, my mind struggled to remember the order and content of the steps. The children didn't always respond as I had anticipated; I experienced moments of confusion, uncertaintly, and, occasionally, panic. There I was not knowing what to do next! Steps 1, 2, and 3 were the easiest to handle mentally. They simply required me to think--alone. It was so easy to forget about making those daily little plans to spend some pleasant time with a disruptive child; remaining calm and courteous when a child was disrupting or being rude or sassy was even more difficult. Often I was unsure as to when one step was exhausted and it was time to move on to the next. Step 6, in particular, gave me trouble. How many times should I go through this step with one child; how did one gauge progress in terms of time intervals between making a plan and breaking it? I was sustained in continuing to practice the discipline process in spite of my uncertainties, fumbles, and periods of discouragement by Glasser's comment, "It takes two years to become an effective reality therapist."

In time, I began to establish a rhythm, acquiring an intuitive knowledge that a child was responding, a growing confidence in knowing

when to stick with a step or to move on to the next. The cumulative responses of the children added to my knowledge of what was effective behavior on my part and what wasn't. It did take two years to learn to use this process effectively and with confidence.

The non-punitive aspect of the discipline process is the key element--the reason why it works. A disruptive child who has given up on making it in school, ever being accepted or liked by adults, thrives on punishment. It is through the latter that he maintains his status, receives his recognition for being the troublemaker. He has given up on receiving positive recognition in school, so he'd rather have negative recognition than none at all. He is used to provoking adults to yell at him, put him down, recount his numerous past misbehaviors. But when he is treated kindly and firmly and told repeatedly that he is always welcome back from a time-out when he's ready to work it out, he begins to think, "It's going to happen anyway so why fight it?" There is no status in sitting in a time-out spot with nobody angry at you or upset by your antics. Furthermore, the student is out of the action, and there are very few who can stand this for more than half a day. It is too painful.

Step 9 is crucial only for the most disruptive students. But two trips home usually does the trick. This step requires the principal's support, of course, as he alone has the authority to send a child home.

I've been asked many times while conducting inservices on Glasser's discipline procedures what teachers can do if the principal is opposed to having children sent to the office and/or sent home. All I can suggest is try to show a principal how the process helps not only children and teachers but also principals. Principals generally have to deal with the most disruptive children in school. This is not a pleasant task, particularly as chronic disrupters wind up in their offices repeatedly. The underlying statement of Glasser's discipline process is that children will be expected to follow reasonable rules while in school, providing a reference point that cannot be successfully argued against, especially by parents. Therefore, adherence to Glasser's discipline process makes the principal's job much less upsetting while giving it strong authority. It saves a lot of unnecessary

and nonproductive talk.

If Steps One through Seven of the discipline process have not worked, I send the child to see the principal for the first time. The principal greets the child in a friendly way, listens to him, asks him to state the rule he has broken, and then tells him he is expected to obey the rule. All of this takes very little time; the principal remains relaxed and friendly. Then the principal tells the child that if he is sent to the office a second time for misbehavior, the child will call his parents from the principal's office and explain why he is there. The child is told that following a third trip to the office for misbehavior, the principal will call the parent and ask him/her to come to school. Principal, parent, and child go over the record of misbehavior and behavioral expectations. Parent and child are informed that the consequences for being sent to the office for continued misbehavior are as follows: Fourth trip, parent will be called to come get the child and take him home for the rest of the day; fifth visit, child goes home for 1½ days; sixth visit, child goes home for 2 days, and so on. This process has to be used only for the most disruptive children.

I send a child to the office only after all the preliminary strategies have been used many times: issuing a simple corrective to stop; asking the child to state the broken rule, evaluate his behavior, come up with a simple verbal or written plan to do better, and make a commitment to the plan; and "time-outs" in the room, in the hall, or in the office. Every opportunity is given a child to assume responsibility for working out his problems. Only as a last resort, and following patient, kind, persevering effort, do I send a child to the office to have his first chat with the principal.

I've put Glasser's principles into practice in a variety of ways. First, I make friends with all the children. I become involved with them personally in warm, friendly, caring relationships. I have disciplined myself to be courteous, kind, considerate of children, regardless of how they are behaving toward me. This was very difficult. When a child was mean, nasty, or sassy to me before I started practicing Reality Therapy, I responded with a show of power and authority. That mean, nasty child found himself in the principal's office! But this did not teach him how to behave responsibly. There is nothing

quite as disarming to misbehaving students as simple courtesy. It is very difficult to remain angry and offensive in the face of courtesy.

Second, I now laugh a lot with children, whereas before I was a more serious school teacher. Laughter is a magnificent gift. It breaks down antagonism. It's almost impossible to overdo it.

Third, in my classroom, lots of talking is encouraged. I was brought up to believe that a good classroom was a quiet classroom. I no longer believe this. There is a time for silence, but there should be much talking. Many children have nobody who really listens to them. Verbal self-expression, while undervalued in our schools, is highly valued in our society. When a person goes to an interview for admission to college or to get a job, it is his capacity to verbally express himself well that often makes the difference.

Fourth, I have become more of a listener. I do far less talking than before. I have learned, through classroom meetings and informal discussions, to really listen to children.

When I began teaching seven years ago, I made the rules. For the past five years, the children made the rules, spending at least an hour a day of the first week of school working on their development. Everyone has the opportunity to make suggestions. Each proposed rule is discussed, debated, and voted upon. I have one vote just like everyone else. My students have an investment in the rules and are therefore motivated to respect them. The following is the set of rules developed by the fourth and fifth graders I had during the school year 1976-77:

Classroom Rules

1. Gum chewing will be allowed but with mouth closed and no bubble blowing in the building.
2. No name-calling, put-downs, sarcasm, ridicule, or making fun of anyone. We agree to respect the rights and persons of others.
3. Treat other people's and school property with respect--use only with permission and in a proper manner.
4. No stealing.
5. Do not use SCIS (science) equipment unless you have permission to do so from your teacher.
6. Do not interfere with people who are working.

7. Do not go in other people's desks or lockers unless you have their permission.
8. No shouting anywhere in the building except when permitted to do so in the gym.
9. No fighting.
10. Each student is responsible for his/her own learning.
11. No pushing, shoving, or tripping anywhere. Within the building, running is permitted only in gym and "up the stairs."
12. No sliding down the bannisters.
13. Behave responsibly at all times.
14. When the teacher requests attention, pay attention.
15. Do not tease little kids or hassle patrols.
16. No bouncing or throwing balls in the building.
17. Keep chair legs on the floor.
18. Honor a person's request to be left alone.
19. Don't chase another person unless he/she wishes to be chased (at recess).
20. No standing on furniture or shelves.
21. Put chairs up before leaving school at 3:40.
22. Don't interrupt a person when he/she is speaking.
23. No whistling in class except during free time.
24. Allow everyone in games if they wish to play.
25. No pencil tapping (except for the last five minutes of school on the last day of school).
26. Raise your hand when you wish to speak during discussions.

(Any rule may be deleted or a new one added upon majority vote of the class. The rule below was added during the year.)

27. No treats allowed unless there is enough for everyone (with the exception of gum).

Classroom Meetings

Glasser (1975c) considers classroom meetings to be the backbone of a school without failure. Chapter 10 in *Schools Without Failure* gives a thorough explanation of this concept. Basically, classroom meetings, conducted every day when needed, or two or three times a week at least, provide the means for building involvement (trusting, warm, caring relationships between all the members of the class and the teacher), success

experiences for all students, promotion of a positive self-concept for each child, and opportunities for creative, insightful, and critical thinking.

In a classroom meeting we sit in a tight circle, creating an atmosphere of intimacy and equality. My job is to lead a discussion on some topic or problem the children want to talk about. Meetings are open-ended. In other words, there are no right or wrong answers. Each person is encouraged to make contributions free of criticism or put-downs. One person speaks at a time, and each person's viewpoints are to be respected; attentive listening is encouraged. A child may challenge or disagree with a classmate's statement, but must do so respectfully. Also, we do not mention people's names in our discussions. As the moderator, I do not agree or disagree with anyone, but through asking the group questions like, "What do you think of that idea?" or, "Jack, I'd be interested in knowing your thoughts on the subject," I promote a lively and free exchange of thoughts and opinions.

The end product of the discussions isn't nearly as important as the process itself: learning how to respectfully interact with others; learning to listen and to develop verbal fluency; having others listen to you; developing mutual acceptance and understanding within the group; and encouraging the ability to think.

Several classroom meetings are described in the various parts of the book, but I'll describe one now that illustrates well how the children become involved and self-directed in the meetings.

One particular fifth-grade class happened at random to be made up of many children with superior minds and unusual talents. One child was a gifted violinist. Two youngsters, advanced in math skills, were working on algebra and geometry during the final three months of school. Two others wrote extraordinary poetry. Many in the class did school work well beyond the fifth-grade curriculum.

There were some in this group who were excellent athletes and some who were not, a good number of whom wished to be athletes. In the spring, kickball was the major game at recess. A few soccer enthusiasts had their own game going. My students followed certain rules about games, but with two other classrooms out at recess at the same time, it was difficult to get consensus about how the game was to be played, who

could play, and what constituted good sportsmanship. Several members of my homeroom requested a classroom meeting.

The boy who opened the discussion declared that the teams were always unfair, and he did not like playing under those conditions. Several girls protested that no one wanted them on their team because they were not good players. Nobody gave them a chance. When they would get up at the plate, the infield moved in so far that they were always thrown out before they got half-way to first base. Other complaints followed. One boy said he hated it when the winning team chanted, "We won, we won, we won!" all the way back to the building. It made him want to punch one of their players in the mouth.

Eventually, the boy who had opened the discussion asked if the class could have a kickball game once a week among themselves at a time other than recess. We had been working all year to develop a sense of community, a spirit of respect for individual talents and interests, and appreciation of each child's worth. We had made very good progress, but there was still some friction and occasional teasing. I sensed that something important was happening in this classroom meeting, so I asked how many of my students would like to have their own kickball game once a week. All raised their hands.

Our first game was scheduled for the last half hour of Wednesday afternoon. The students decided that each week four different captains would choose teams. The first group to choose teams tried to match the teams evenly by dividing the best players and the weaker players. The game was vigorous, but when we got back to the room, four players were unhappy. They claimed that the teams were unfair. A good discussion followed and finally honed in on the question--"What is fair?" Tim, the boy who had suggested the idea of our own kickball game, was very vocal about the teams being unfair. I listened carefully, but could not figure out what he was really saying. Finally, I asked, "Tim, are you saying that you would consider the teams fair if your team won?"

"Yes!" he said.

Further discussion naturally followed this comment, and then one of the girls said, "Okay, why don't the four kids who think today's teams were unfair choose the teams for next week?"

"How?" queried another.

"Any way they think is fair. Let them choose the method," said another.

The group agreed.

The following Wednesday, the disgruntled four drew names out of a hat. When the team lists were read off, there were howls of protest. Most of the better players wound up on team A. Tim was on Team B and he protested the loudest!

Then one of the children said, "Tim, you helped choose the teams according to your idea of fair. We agreed to let you do it your way. Let's play!"

Team A had a field day. Even the less-skilled players kicked and caught successfully. They were jubilant! Halfway through the game, Tim and half of Team B walked off the field and went on the swings, or just sat down on the grass. They were very unhappy. Some of the players on Team A did not know what to do. Several wanted me to make the B players return to the game. I suggested that we return to the classroom and have a classroom meeting instead. As there was little time before the safety patrols had to go on duty, I suggested we have our meeting first thing the next day.

During this classroom meeting, the children brought up the issue of fairness again and finally, after much discussion, decided that it was impossible to always have perfectly fair teams. They also concluded that if winning were the most important thing, then a lot of players would not have much fun in the game. It was also agreed that if each set of four captains was going to be allowed to choose teams according to its personal definition of fair, then the rest would have to accept this with good grace and be good sports. One said, "Do we always have to play kickball? I'd like to play baseball."

The group was polled to find out how they felt about this, and decided to play one game of soccer, one of baseball, one of "Capture the Flag," and the final game would consist of relay races. Two of the good soccer players taught the rest of us how to play, explained the rules, and positioned us on the field. That was one of the most enjoyable games I ever played with my students. The rest of the games were equally as great. Something wonderful happened because of the games

and the discussions that followed. Winning lost some of its significance. Giving one's best, practicing good sportsmanship, and having fun took precedence. The good players started coaching the less able ones, who made good progress and started enjoying games as they never had before. The superstars delighted in their pupils' progress. The supportive atmosphere and the enjoyment they had as a total group was marvelous.

Near the end of the year, the gym teacher stopped me in the teachers' lounge and said,

> Something beautiful has happened in your class. The other day we were playing volleyball. When it came time for Nick to serve, he just stood there with the ball in his hands and froze. I guess he didn't know what to do. Without a word, Ned walked over and said as nicely as you please, "This is how you serve, Nick." He showed him, then told Nick to try it. Nick goofed and Ned said, "That's okay, try it again. You'll get the hang of it." Ned tried again and succeeded. The whole class waited patiently without saying a word while Ned instructed. Then they all applauded when Nick got it over the net. I couldn't get over it! Every gym class should be like that!

Nick had the least athletic ability of any child in the class. He was also teased unmercifully for many things during his early school years. Ned was an accomplished athlete and a superior student. During the first half of the fifth grade, he teased and made fun of Nick more than anyone.

The culminating degree of community feeling achieved by this class was a direct outcome of the classroom meeting during which the children requested to have their own weekly kickball game and the series of games and meetings that followed. We had achieved something rare--a sense of community of which every child in the class was a part.

In summary, Glasser made me very aware that the way I behave toward my students and the kind of environment I create in the classroom can contribute significantly to the encouragement of success-identities or to failure identities. To foster success-identities, I must establish warm, caring relationships with my students and encourage them to care about one another. I must also encourage talking, listening, and critical thinking, and help students learn to accept responsibility for their behavior, evaluate their behavior, and come up with a

plan to do better when necessary--all while being courteous, kind, non-punitive, and tough. Glasser believes in starting with behavior because that can be changed if a child is free and encouraged to do so. He made me aware of the importance of laughter and fun in school, and the necessity of seeing to it that each child receives something from me every day that helps him feel cared about and allows him to achieve some success.

Chapter 2. Teacher Effectiveness Training (T.E.T.)

Effective Communication

Glasser gave me a destination and a means of travel. Gordon showed me how to get there. Through Teacher Effectiveness Training, I acquired communication skills and a problem-solving method for resolving conflicts which enable me to promote children's self-esteem, self-confidence, and interpersonal skills, and warm, caring, responsible relationships between me and my students and among students themselves.

Four major concepts from T.E.T., caused me to change some deeply ingrained patterns of behavior and attitudes: The Language of Unacceptance, The Language of Acceptance, The Concept of Problem Ownership, and The No-Lose Method of Resolving Conflicts. While I will limit my discussion to these four concepts, I refer you to Thomas Gordon's (1974) *Teacher Effectiveness Training* or *Parent Effectiveness Training* (Gordon, 1970) for a complete presentation of his ideas.

During the inservice, the instructor listed twelve ways parents and teachers typically respond to children. Gordon calls these "typical twelve" door slammers to effective communication, pointing out how they damage the self-esteem, erode the confidence, and stifle the creativity of the child while crippling the love relationship between child and parent or child and teacher (Gordon, 1970).

1. Ordering, directing, commanding
2. Warning, admonishing, threatening
3. Exhorting, moralizing, preaching
4. Advising, giving solutions or suggestions
5. Lecturing, teaching, giving logical arguments
6. Judging, criticizing, disagreeing, blaming
7. Praising, agreeing
8. Name-calling, ridiculing, shaming
9. Interpreting, analyzing, diagnosing
10. Reassuring, sympathizing, consoling, supporting
11. Probing, questioning, interrogating
12. Withdrawing, distracting, humoring, diverting.

I recognized my behavior in these "typical twelve" responses (see Gordon, 1970 or 1974 for numerous examples of each). For me, a moment of truth arrived so suddenly and so forcefully that I was somewhat stunned.

Following this session, I did a lot of serious thinking about the way I responded when my students had problems, and in an attempt to put myself in their place, I asked myself, "When you have a problem, who do you go to talk to about it and why?" I quickly discovered that the adult friends I seek out have several characteristics in common: They are generally very tolerant and accepting of me and others; they like themselves and possess an inner security; and they listen attentively. Seldom do they say much. I talk, they listen. During this apparently one-sided communication, I have the feeling that they care about me as a person. They do not offer solutions or tell me what to do, although they offer suggestions occasionally. They give me the feeling that they trust in my ability to solve my own problem. When sharing problems or fears with these friends, I feel good about myself, am able to talk openly, and usually am able to gain some insights and make some progress toward a solution. These friends are not guilty of the "typical twelve," and that's basically why I seek them out. I don't like the "typical twelve" turned on me!

The twelve roadblocks to communication are ineffective because they make a person, child or adult, feel blamed, inadequate, resentful, guilty, defensive, resistive, misunderstood, untrustworthy, frustrated, and therefore, unloved. They close up the child, communicating to him that the problem is somehow his fault and that he must or should change.

Well, there was no other choice for me. I had to give up the "typical twelve" with children. But it left me pretty shaky. What was left? Nothing? Fortunately not.

The Language of Acceptance

The language of acceptance is transmitted through the way we respond to another. In the interaction, there is a relationship of mutual trust, respect, and caring. Each is accepted by the other just as he is, and in this climate, both can grow, learn to solve problems, make constructive changes on their own initiatives, gain psychological strength, become more

productive and creative, and, most importantly in my mind, experience the thrill of being able to say, "I figured out how to solve my problem myself!"

Before proceeding to specific communication techniques that help to create acceptance, I'll first describe the concept of problem ownership as taught in T.E.T. and P.E.T.

Problem Ownership

In any relationship between two people, there will be times when person A is upset by the behavior of person B. Person A experiences some kind of unpleasant feeling--disappointment, hurt, frustration, anger, and so on. Either person A has a need that is not being met or she is dissatisfied with her own behavior. A, then, owns the problem. At other times in a relationship, A's needs are being met, but her behavior may interfere with the needs of person B. Then B is upset or frustrated. B then owns the problem.

Before the T.E.T. inservice, I don't think I thought much about who owned a problem in a given situation. But looking back, I realize that I made many children's problems mine, thereby putting myself in the position of the problem solver. It took effort and great restraint to change my ways and allow children to own their problems. The following communication techniques helped me make the change.

Ways to help with student-owned problems. I learned four different ways to listen to students and thereby be a helping agent when they have problems: passive listening (silence); acknowledgement response; door openers; and active listening.

With the first three, one simply listens (Passive Listening), making a few noncommittal responses such as "I see," or "Oh!" or "Mmm" (Acknowledgement Responses), as well as a few somewhat more explicit comments like "Go ahead, I'm listening," or "This seems to be important to you" (door openers). It is essential with all three listening techniques that the listener not communicate any of his own ideas, judgments, or feelings, yet invites and encourages the speaker to share his. These three techniques help, but the fourth, active listening, is the best.

Active listening. In active listening, the receiver of a message tries to understand what feelings lie behind the spoken words, what the message really means. The receiver then puts his understanding of the message into

his own words and feeds it back to the sender for verification. Again, the receiver does not send a message of his own--advice, opinion, evaluation, judgment, question, analysis, or solution--but only what he thinks the sender's message means.

Gordon's (1970, 1974) books contain many examples of active listening. I'll give one brief example from my classroom: Mary comes to me with a problem. First, I'll give my typical response before T.E.T., and then an active listening response.

Mary: "Jane doesn't like me any more. She wouldn't play with me at recess, and she won't eat lunch with me today."

Me: "Oh, I'm sure Jane still likes you (reassuring). Why don't you just be very nice to her until lunch time, and I'm sure she'll be friendly again before it's time to eat " (offering a solution).

What T.E.T. taught me was the hidden messages Mary might have heard even though I meant to be helpful. This opened up a new level of communication, an awareness that when I talk to a child and think that I'm conveying a simple, straightforward message, my verbal response may actually convey several messages. For example, Mary may have heard the following messages in my response:

"You are saying that I'm at fault and I should change."

"You think I've done something wrong or bad."

"You don't really care about my problem and don't want to hear about it."

"You don't think I can solve this problem by myself."

The following is illustrative of active listening:

Mary: "Jane doesn't like me anymore. She won't play with me at recess, and she won't eat lunch with me today."

Me: "You're upset because Jane didn't play with you at recess and won't eat lunch with you today."

Mary: "Yes! She's my best friend and she's being mean." (near tears)

Me: "Having Jane as a best friend is important to you and it hurts you when she is mean to you."

Mary: "Yes, Jane's the best friend I ever had and I don't want to lose her."

Me: "You're worried about losing Jane as your best friend."

Mary: "She likes Patsy. Yesterday she said she'd play with me after school but she didn't. She played with Patsy and they're going to eat lunch together today. I don't like Patsy! It's not fair!"

Me: "Your feelings are really hurt and you feel left out. And you don't like Patsy?"

Mary: "Yes, I'm scared I won't have anyone to play with and I don't like to eat lunch alone. Actually, I don't dislike Patsy. She's nice, but I guess I'm jealous."

Me: "You feel scared and jealous at the same time."

Mary: "Yeah, but it's partly my fault. I haven't been very nice to Jane since I found out she played with Patsy."

Me: "You think that you contributed to the problem by not being as nice as you usually are to Jane. What alternatives do you think you have?"

Mary: "I guess I'll tell Jane I'm sorry for being mean, but I'm going to tell her she hurt my feelings, too."

As I started to listen better, tried to hear the feelings coming through when children came to me with problems, and reflected back those feelings in my own words, I began to make progress in the art of active listening. I have a long way to go. It is difficult, and my past gets in the way -- I catch myself slipping back into the "typical twelve." Sometimes I make a judgment, as all teachers must, that particular situations call for something other than active listening. However, I am working at being a good active listener, because I believe it is the most important of all communication skills I've learned in helping others with their problems. In the example given with Mary, which actually took place, Mary grew. She was able to state quite clearly the feelings she was experiencing, the various reasons why she was upset, evaluate her own contribution to the problem, and come up with a way to start to solve the problem. Because I listened and was able to reflect back her feelings, she knew that I took her problem seriously, I cared, I accepted her just as she was, and by not attempting to jump in with my own thoughts and ideas, I tacitly expressed confidence in her ability to solve her problem. Mary gained confidence during our short exchange and our relationship gained strength.

I believe that active listening, even in the simplest of exchanges, helps a child to grow.

The following examples show the change in the way I respond to simple statements by the children.

1. Pre-T.E.T.

   Child: "I got all the math problems right!"

   Me: "Well, good for you!"

   Post-T.E.T.

   Child: "I got all the math problems right!"

   Me: "You feel really good about that."

   Child: "Yeah, I sure do! I'm even starting to like math!"

2. Pre-T.E.T.

   Child: "Mrs. M., Chad took my pen and he won't give it back!"

   Me: "Chad, please give Tom's pen back."

   There would follow a series of countercharges of what Tom did to Chad and what Chad did to Tom. Chad would eventually give the pen back, but ill feelings remained, and the teasing would continue.

   Post-T.E.T.

   Child: "Mrs. M., Chad took my pen, and he won't give it back!"

   Me: "You are really upset about that."

   Child: "I sure am! It makes me mad!"

In the first example, I switched from instant praise to reflecting back the feelings, and in the second, from jumping in to solve the problem to, again, relecting back the feelings and waiting to see if Tom could figure out what to do about his problem. You might say that such incidents are trivial, and you would be correct, but many, many such trivial incidents as these occur every day in the classroom, and it has been my experience that the active listening approach, over a period of time, produces a lot of good feelings and much growth in sensitivity to others, as well as problem-solving skills. The freedom to grow and the unspoken messages behind my words of acceptance of feelings, caring enough to listen to the real message behind the children's words, and the all-important message, "I have confidence in your ability to solve your problem," do make a difference. Also, other children hear these brief exchanges and learn how their classmates are feeling.

In the classroom, when lengthy active listening is called for, I often ask an individual child or a small group if we can talk about the problem at recess or some specific time during the day when the others

are able to carry on on their own for a while.

Classroom meetings provide excellent opportunities for me and the children to actively listen. I try to limit my responses during classroom meetings, because the purpose of the meetings is to encourage the children to talk and listen to one another.

Active listening sessions, whether short or lengthy, are often inconclusive. That is, no apparent solution is arrived at. The situation is left hanging. This used to bother me, until I realized that the child seems to work on and often works out the problem afterwards on his own. I have seen this happen many times. The active listening seems to get the child started. He then moves forward on his own. How, or if, the problems are ever solved, I many or may not learn. What I do know is that children have a great capacity to help themselves with just a little help from me. This capacity of children to work out solutions--sometimes very creatively--to their problems I had seriously underestimated before practicing active listening. I refer you to Gordon's *Parent Effectiveness Training* (1970) or *Teacher Effectiveness Training* (1974) for many examples of lengthy active listening sessions. However, I would like to quote from *Parent Effectiveness Training* (P.E.T.) a report of a particularly skeptical father in one of Gordon's P.E.T. classes:

> I want to report to the class an amazing experience I had this week. My daughter, Jean, and I haven't said a civil word to each other for about two years, except maybe, "Pass the bread," or, "Can I have the salt and pepper?" The other night, she and her boyfriend were sitting at the table in the kitchen when I came home. I overheard my daughter telling her boyfriend how much she hated school and how she was disgusted with most of her girlfriends. I decided right then and there I would sit down and do nothing but active listen, even if it killed me. Now, I'm not going to say I did a perfect job, but I surprised myself. I wasn't too bad. Well, will you believe it, they both started talking to me and never stopped for two hours. I learned more about my daughter and what she is like in those two hours than I had in the past five years. On top of that, the rest of the week she was downright friendly to me. What a change! (Gordon, 1970, p. 56)

As I began to make the switch from "problem-solver" to "active listener" when children owned the problems, the children were engaged in making a switch of their own. At first they did not like being put in the position of being allowed to own their problems; it was so much simpler to dump the problem in my lap. If I accepted the problem, the responsibility for solving it was then removed from the child, and that was

momentarily comforting. Children are accustomed to having teachers take on their problems. But as they gained experience stating their problems, expressed their feelings, felt free to examine their own behavior and that of others in conflict situations, were listened to and understood, initiated problem solving, and came up with their own solutions, it was obvious that they felt good about themselves. The growth in self-confidence was visible. Think about the power of continual unspoken messages that say to a child, "I'm listening; I respect your feelings; I am aware that this problem is important to you; I'm confident in your ability to work it out."

When you allow a child to own his problem, this doesn't mean you abandon him in his hour of need. You can help generate alternatives or throw out possible things that could be done if the child seems utterly stumped, but it is important to let the child make the choices as to what he wants to try to do.

Sometimes children do not want to own their problem, and will fight to avoid doing so. I'll give one illustrative example:

Bill was with me as a fourth grader in a combined fourth and fifth grade. He had a rough school year, evidencing considerable withdrawal and a chip-on-the-shoulder attitude toward the other children. Bill was a loner in my room, and was the scapegoat for a large group of aggressive, often hostile fourth- and fifth-grade boys. He did little school work and spent a good part of the day staring at the papers on his desk or daydreaming. Bill lived in terror of the gang of boys who picked on and intimidated him at recess and lunchtime. Going to and returning from school, the gang teased, intimidated, and occasionally beat him up. During Bill's fourth-grade year, the principal and I spent hours and considerable effort helping Bill with the withdrawal problem, his fears and lack of social skills, getting him out of the "scapegoat" position (which he actively invited), and motivating him to do some school work. Bill was bright and a superb reader. Progress was made in all areas, particularly with social skills, self-image, and confidence. But there was a reluctance on Bill's part to accept the fact that his behavior contributed to his problems. In other words, he resisted owning the problem.

With the fifth-grade gang in the middle school and several of Bill's

friends in my room during his fifth grade year, he got off to a very good start. He was more cooperative about doing his schoolwork, happier in school, and he had friends. But a certain lethargy persisted, and Bill had to be supervised closely and prodded to do his work. His sticking power regarding academic tasks was not strong. He was fairly accomplished at the art of not doing his writing or math.

Following the winter recess at Christmas time, Bill was gone for three months on sabbatical. When he returned, he was enthusiastically welcomed by his friends and he told me how much he enjoyed the school he attended. His father told me shortly after their return that the school Bill had attended demanded much less of him academically than I did. Bill slipped quickly back into the "do-as-little-as-possible" routine academically, but socially he was having a grand time. I encouraged him to talk about his school work, and active listened. But things continued pretty much unchanged.

One morning we spent an hour and a half on writing. After 45 minutes, Bill had one sentence on the paper. I had checked on his progress several times, and his comments were, "I'm thinking," and then, "I can't think of anything to write." Both were two of his favorite excuses for avoiding the task. Finally, I decided that a tough approach was necessary. Thirty minutes before lunch, I said, "Bill, before you go home for lunch today, you are to write one full page of your rough draft." I knew he could easily do this if he put his mind to it. He said nothing. Five minutes before the lunch bell, I noticed there were two lines of writing on Bill's paper. I said nothing. The bell rang. The kids began to go out the door and Bill got up to leave. I asked to see his paper. He mumbled something about "still thinking." I said, "Well, keep at it." He looked at me and said, "But I have to go home for lunch now!" I said, "After you have written one page, you may go to lunch."

"But if I do that, there won't be time to go home for lunch," and his eyes filled with tears.

I replied, "Bill, that's your problem."

With that, he burst into tears, covered his face with his hands, and sobbed loudly. Some of the children were alarmed at the loud crying, and the teacher next door popped into the room exclaiming, "Good heavens, what's the matter?"

I was not upset in the least (it was not my problem). After quietly clearing the room, I said to Bill, "You chose not to do your writing this morning, right?"

"Yes," with louder than ever sobbing.

"Whose problem is that?"

"Mine," sniffle, sniffle.

"Okay, you have a choice. You can either do your work, or if you can't handle school today, you can go home, with your Dad's permission, and come back tomorrow and try again. What would you like to do?"

"I want to go home."

Bill called his Dad from the office and received permission to go home. I said, "See you tomorrow, Bill, and I hope you have a better day," sending him off with a smile and a friendly manner.

Bill was waiting for me at the door following lunch, with a smile and a full page of writing. (Lunch hour is 35 minutes.) I was very surprised. He said, "I finished my writing and I'd like to be in school this afternoon. From now on, I'll do my school work when I'm supposed to." I replied, "Fine, I'm glad you're here."

I never knew what happened to Bill within that 35-minute lunch hour, but a startling change occurred. Bill owned the problem regarding school work for the remaining two and a half months of school. He conscientiously did his math and writing, producing a considerable amount of high quality work. I still monitored his work pretty closely. If he appeared to be daydreaming, I'd give a little encouraging comment, and he'd say, smiling, "I know, I know!" and get right back to work. He wasted very little time after the "lunch episode," and was extremely pleased with his academic achievements, verbalizing his good feelings about them frequently.

What Teachers Can Do When Students Give Them Problems

There are many times when student behaviors interfere with teachers' legitimate needs. In these situations, teachers own the problems and need a process for helping themselves. See Gordon (1974) for a thorough discussion of ineffective confrontation messages to students that most of us are programmed to use when under stress in the classroom. In T.E.T., I learned about an effective confrontation message, the I-message, and how to use

it when my students' behavior is unacceptable to me and interfering with my needs.

An I-message, to be most effective, has three components: it must convey to the students *what* is creating a problem for the teacher; it must reveal the *concrete effect* the specific behavior has on the teacher; and it must state the *feelings* the teacher is experiencing due to the behavior.

> Example: If all those uncapped jars of paint, dirty brushes, and papers are left on the counter (what is creating the problem), I will have to clean it up (tangible effect), and that will make me feel very put-upon (feelings I'm experiencing).

An I-message is effective because the teacher makes it clear what is going on within him and is open enough to share this with the students. It also leaves responsibility for the students' behavior with them. In other words, the students are free to decide what to do about their behavior. An I-message on the teacher's part is, however, risky in that it reveals the self. Therefore, the teacher is vulnerable.

Before learning about I-messages, I frequently resorted to "you-messages" when confronting students:

"<u>You</u> clean up that sink area."

"How can I teach <u>you</u> if you don't have your materials in school?"

"<u>You</u> feed those guinea pigs and clean that smelly cage."

"How can <u>you</u> be so thoughtless?"

Children are notoriously oblivious to the needs of parents and teachers as they go about the business of trying to meet their own needs, and much of their apparent inconsideration of the needs of adults is unintentional. But "you-messages" have the effect of putting a child down, resulting not in cooperation but in defensiveness, resistance, attempts to justify himself, and sometimes retaliation. In addition to being put-downs, you-messages fail to let the child know the adult's true feelings (anger, the apparent feeling, usually serves as a cover for the real feeling) and precisely why the adult is upset. In other words, a you-message is not clear. In addition, it generally says more about the receiver than the sender, muddying the waters further. An I-message is clear. It lets a child know exactly what is upsetting me and how I feel in a much less threatening way than a you-message. It allows a child to

modify his own behavior rather than being told what he should, must, or ought to do.

After discovering that children respond to I-messages (delivered when I own the problem) with consideration and thoughtfulness, I also realized that I-messages allowed me to be completely natural. If the noise level in the room gets to be greater than I can stand, I can just let go with, "The noise in here is shattering my nerves!" The room quiets down quickly, and we all go about our business with no ill feelings.

I don't always form a perfect I-message, one that meets the three criteria. In fact, maybe a majority of my I-messages fail the test, revealing what is upsetting me but not always the tangible effect something is having upon me and the feelings I'm experiencing. Nevertheless, even incomplete I-messages have very positive results.

Sometimes something upsets me that has nothing to do with the behavior of the children in my class. Nevertheless, if I bring my "upset" into the classroom, I've found it beneficial for all to let the children know what's going on inside me. I do this by giving them an I-message. One example comes readily to mind.

One day I came to school absolutely distraught. I had misplaced my glasses, without which I cannot read. I looked in all the possible places in school where I might have set them down. I checked with the custodian. No glasses! After attendance, I told the kids of my misfortune and said, "Consequently, I am in a terrible grump today, and I know my disposition won't improve until I find my glasses. If I snap at anyone, I hope you will understand that it's my problem, not yours." I was letting them know my feelings and that it was not their fault. I was almost certain that I had left my glasses right there in the middle of my desk, as I had worked until 5:00 at school the evening before. When I got home, they weren't in my purse. I had an uncomfortable feeling that one particular boy in my class, whom I had seen in the hall about 4:30 when I made a trip to the office, had taken the glasses.

The children voluntarily looked for the glasses all day. They searched exhaustively, and were so well-behaved and solicitious that it was both touching and humorous. Right before lunch, the students told me that they were going to take up a collection to help me buy new glasses, which they knew were expensive. I thanked them for their thoughtfulness,

but told them that it was okay, and that I could manage. The next morning, I was overjoyed to find my glasses on my desk with a note from the night custodian. He had found the glasses tucked in the middle of a large potted plant in the reading lab. I do not know how they got there.

Long after I have forgotten so many of the things I have taught in my classes, I vividly remember with a sense of joy the consideration and thoughtfulness of the children as they respond to my needs and upsets, regardless of the cause.

I'll give an example of how I presented a problem that I owned to the whole class and how it was solved. In this instance, the behavior of the children caused the problem.

One particular class simply did not respond when I asked for their attention. I used my bell, flicked the lights, used a loud voice--all to no avail. Finally, my irritation burst beyond my tolerance level. I called a classroom meeting and told the children that *I* had a serious problem, I could not get their attention quickly enough when I needed it. This caused me to feel irritated and exasperated, and it interfered with my enjoyment of school. I said I thought I had as much right to enjoy school as they did. I said, "When I call for your attention, I want it quickly. I don't like to waste your time or mine." Then I asked them if they would be willing to problem-solve the situation with me.

They could have said no, of course, but they were quite enthusiastic about helping.

For a full half-hour, they came up with all kinds of punishments we could parcel out to those who didn't respond to my call for attention:

1. Keep an offender five minutes after school for every 30 seconds of continued talking or fooling around after I asked for attention
2. Take recess away from everyone who didn't respond promptly
3. Make all offenders sit against the wall at recess
4. Take away an offender's free time

Many other complicated punishments were offered, and each was vigorously debated. "No, don't take away recess! I need recess!" "I couldn't stay after school--I have a paper route."

Finally, I reiterated what I had said many times before--that I didn't believe in punishment--of them or myself. Keeping students after school punishes me as well as them. I have my own life to lead, and want

no part of babysitting after school. Sending them to the office punishes the school secretary. She has her work to do, and does not like to baby-sit a group of unhappy students who are missing recess. I also agreed with the young lady who thought recess was necessary for children. Then I repeated that what I wanted was to find a way of getting their attention quickly that was acceptable to all of us.

After twenty-five minutes of discussion, my high school aide could stand it no longer. She said, "Kids, everything you've said so far is an after-the-fact solution. You're all talking about what to do with kids when they *don't respond* to Mrs. M.'s request for attention. She wants to know how she can *get* your attention."

There was a noticeable silence. The kids were stumped. One boy suggested that they think about it and continue the discussion the next day. The following day, they were still struggling for some constructive solutions--and I mean struggling! They could not change the focus from punishment, but I rejected all punishment solutions as unacceptable to me. Finally, in sheer desperation, one youngster suggested a buddy system among friends. I would ask for attention by ringing the bell, and as one friend hears the bell, he would say to his friends, "Keep quiet, Mrs. M. wants us to listen." Almost all the children said, "Yeah, that's a good idea."

Then another youngster said, "That won't work. Friends are always talking to each other, so not enough kids will pay attention when Mrs. M. rings the bell. They'll just keep on talking to each other."

"Yeah," said another kid, laughing. "You know, we all hear that bell. The problem is that we don't pay attention to it."

There was considerable agreement on this last statement, and a few moments of embarassed silence. They finally settled on an "across-the-room" buddy system. I would ring the bell, and the students who heard it would tell those who continued to talk to keep quiet.

I asked, "Do you mean, yell across the room, 'Keep quiet!'?"

"Yeah," said the child who offered the solution.

"But that will make the noise even louder than ever," said another. He stood up and said, "Can't you hear half the room yelling, 'Keep quiet!'?" as he bellowed to the end of the room. Appreciative laughter followed his demonstration.

"Okay, we'll get out of our seats and go over to someone who is still talking and say, "'Keep quiet,' quietly."

I could hardly keep from laughing, but accepted the group solution. They never used it, but thereafter responded to my bell promptly enough to meet my needs.

The rewards of this hour of problem-solving were great. With the initial I-message and the call for a classroom meeting, the children realized that their inattentiveness was a serious problem for me, and seriously interfered with my needs, not only as a teacher, but as a person. They also learned much about constructive problem-solving. So used to and accepting of the punishment principle, they had great difficulty getting to the heart of the problem, which was ignoring the bell most of them heard.

This problem-solving session has given me many a chuckle over the years. It occurred early in the year. It took an hour, but it saved me endless days of frustration and irritation. The classroom meeting just described is an example of the No-Lose problem solving process learned in T.E.T.

No-Lose Problem Solving

Whenever there exists a confrontation situation between people, there exists a conflict of needs. In our culture, problem situations between adults and children are usually approached in such a way that someone "wins" and someone "loses." Each party in the conflict wants to get his way and uses many of the "typical twelve" responses to achieve this end. The "loser" is naturally angry, resentful, and feels misunderstood and abused. The relationship is obviously damaged. Because of the bad feelings experienced in winner-loser problem-solving sessions, little or no growth takes place, understanding of one another's viewpoints and feelings is limited or blocked out, and a lot of ill will is created through mutually destructive accusations, name-calling, sarcasm, and blaming. Hostilities linger, people become like strangers to one another, and the desire to get revenge lingers in the background.

The no-lose technique involves sitting down with the child (or children, as I did with my group who did not respond when I desired their attention) and stating your problem (or vice versa), delivering I-messages

that tell clearly what is going on within you--how certain behaviors of the child, or particular situations are interfering with your needs or life. Then it is proposed that each party involved state his feelings or talk about his behaviors, explaining his side and his viewpoint. Then the parties in the dispute generate possible solutions that will meet everyone's needs, keeping at it until a solution is found which is acceptable to all. No one loses, everyone wins. No ill feelings, put-downs, or misunderstandings.

For a complete discussion of this method, examples, and how to handle difficulties that arise, see Gordon (1970 or 1974). It takes time, to be sure, but it is worth the effort and the time. Everyone grows, the creative solutions proposed by children lead you to know and respect them in a new light, and the relationships grow stronger, deeper, and warmer.

Another example from one of my classes illustrates no-lose problem solving. During the beautiful sunny days of May, the fourth and fifth graders in the school began skateboarding at recess and lunch. As more and more skateboards arrived, problems arose. There were incidents of teasing and arguing about who had the classier skateboards and who had inferior models--the old status thing. Children were running into one another, and a few minor accidents occurred. The "experts" were also intimidating the less experienced skateboarders by flashing around, close to, and sometimes smack into them.

Finally, a group of students in my class and another ganged up on Jack, a boy in my room. He had been teased because he didn't have an "in" skateboard and was a relative beginner in its use. The gang taunted and teased Jack, and then started crashing into him on purpose. I was not on recess duty at the time, so I did not see this happen; but I heard about it promptly when my class returned from recess. I was told by the children that Jack was hurt, he was crying, and his skateboard was damaged. I had been concerned about skateboarding for several days, so at this point, I called for a class meeting. This class had participated in many classroom meetings and problem-solving sessions. I said to them, "We have a problem ('we' meaning teachers, principal, and children). The number of accidents and fights over skateboarding is increasing. Today, Jack was deliberately hurt. I expect that parental complaints have already

been made to the principal; the teachers are beginning to wish we wouldn't allow skateboarding; and I suspect that shortly the principal will just say, 'No more skateboards at school.' He and the teachers are concerned about the safety of the children at recess, and the fighting that is increasing. We are also concerned about the increasing number of put-downs that are occurring. Many of you, on the other hand, enjoy skateboarding, and would like to continue it at recess."

Carol jumped up, saying to the group, "Okay, this is our problem. We'd better come up with a plan to save skateboarding and do it quick!" Within minutes, the children divided into groups--one to set up rules about skateboarding; another to find a place on the playground for beginning skateboarders only, with a pattern flow; a third to establish an area and pattern flow for advanced skateboarders; and a fourth to make a ditto of the rules and posters for the two pattern flows. This last group was also charged with the responsibility of presenting the whole plan to the principal and, if approved, to all classrooms on the third floor, for their approval. I did absolutely nothing except suggest that perhaps a pattern flow within each area might be helpful.

Within an hour, the whole plan was ready. The children in group four consulted with the principal, and he approved the plan. Then group four visited each classroom on the third floor, presented the plan, received approval, and gave each room a ditto of the rules.

It was all quite amazing! The kids really wanted to skateboard, but they willingly conceded that the concerns of the adults were legitimate. Their plan was a masterpiece of no-lose problem solving. Everyone was satisfied and everyone felt good about the solution. The principal came to my room after lunch and told the class how pleased he was with their plan, and how proud he was of their excellent problem-solving skills. He said that he would summarize their plan for the school newsletter so that parents would know that skateboarding would be conducted under safe and humane conditions. Then he grinned and said, "I had a few complaints from parents and teachers about skateboarding, and I was seriously thinking of forbidding it at school. But now I have confidence that your plan will work. Thank you!"

The plan did work. There were no more accidents, and few incidents. The experts even began coaching the beginners, and the class decided that

it did not matter what kind of skateboard you had--who cares!

I would like to close this section with a simple observation. After a period of time using simple listening and active listening, applying the principle of problem-ownership, using "I"-messages effectively, and using the "no-lose" problem solving approach, I found that the number of problems dwindled, almost disappeared. There are problems, of course; they don't really disappear. But they are resolved smoothly and amicably, so that they do not seem like "problems" in the sense they used to.

Chapter 3. Teaching Skills for Good Mental Health

Glasser is concerned with the development of success identities through helping children meet their basic needs of love and worth, Gordon (through T.E.T, and P.E.T.) provides effective communication skills to achieve these ends, while the objective of Focus (Groves, Note 1) is to help a child understand his own emotional and social development. Many children and adults are not in touch with their own feelings much beyond sensing that they are experiencing good feelings (happy) or bad feelings (sad or angry). But the range of feelings we experience is wide and being able to discover how we feel in certain situations is a necessary prerequisite to being able to distinguish feeling from behavior. We have no control over feelings but we can learn to control behavior if we are able to distinguish between the two. Glasser starts with changing behavior which adversely affects a child's ability to succeed in school. Focus helps a child understand what is going on inside himself, providing knowledge of self and eventually knowledge of others that makes changing behavior not only more meaningful but more rapid. Effective communication (T.E.T.) is the technique for both behavior modification and expression of feelings.

Underlying the Focus program is the belief that an individual moves in emotional development from self-knowledge which is understanding of self to knowledge of others outside of self including individuals, families, and other institutions. Self-knowledge requires being able to discover how one feels in certain situations so that feelings can be labelled and distinguished from behavior. Feelings cannot be controlled, but behavior can. One cannot gain control of one's behavior unless one is able to apprehend the feelings underlying it.

The next stage after gaining self-knowledge is to discover that those outside of oneself might be different and that this difference is acceptable. It is not a question of who is right and wrong. The third step is

learning to deal with conflict. When what one knows about oneself is harmonious with others with whom one interacts, such as people and institutions, life is harmonious. But frequently there is conflict (emotional, intellectual, physical) and the individual, when he decides to do so, can attempt to take control in three ways. The first two options consist of fight or flight. The fight phenomemon consists of trying to change reality, that which is outside you, to agree with you; this is what the hostile-aggressive child would attempt to do and what a punitive teacher would do. The flight phenomenon consists of either running away or changing yourself to conform to the environment; this is characteristic of the withdrawn and sometimes the passive-aggressive child, or the teacher who ignores or gives into the situation. The third option which is the "healthiest" is to work on compromises. For a child and teacher this would be to broaden the repertoire of responses in conflict situations.

Focus undertakes to find the causes of maladaptive behaviors and to see what can be taught to prevent them. The model of prevention in medicine is fairly recent whereas the model of prevention in education in some areas is much older. We teach the child academic skills long before he will have to use them in real life. For instance, math is taught in school long before the child matures to adulthood when he will have to balance a checkbook, make purchases, figure out income tax. In general, then, our schools do a good job teaching children the cognitive skills which will be needed much later in life. Education also addresses physical skills children need, progressing first from gross motor skills to fine motor skills. It is true that there is far less emphasis on physical development as opposed to intellectual development in school, but the emotional and social development is almost entirely ignored. If you ask any elementary school teacher (at any grade) what a third grader can be expected to do in reading, you would probably get a satisfactory response. However, ask an elementary school teacher what problem solving-skills can be expected of a third grader, and you will probably get a blank stare.

Children and adults alike need social skills in order to gain a reasonable degree of control over their lives; this is crucial to mental health. After gaining self awareness, knowing who you are, what your feelings are, getting in touch with yourself, then you are able to interact

more effectively with others.

Since it is known that the major environmental influences upon a child are the home and the school, the Focus program (through the Focus consultant) reaches both parents and teachers, thereby touching upon the young child's most influential modeling and learning experiences. In answer to the question, "Why a primary prevention program?" Focus responds as follows:

> Education, more than ever before, will need to concern itself with human development. It will need to become a primary force in shaping the whole person, his emotions as well as his intellectual development, his power to create as well as to adjust, his inner equilibrium as well as his effectiveness in dealing with the outer world. . . .
>
> The growing young person needs all the help and understanding he can get so that he will be prepared as well as possible for the strains that he will probably undergo when he enters adolescence. (Joint Commission of Child Mental Health, Note 2)

Goals and Objectives

The goals and objectives of the Focus program, which uses the collaboration between community mental health agencies and the public schools, is to enhance the potential for self-fulfillment and interaction for both children and teachers. It is expected that behavioral problems will be reduced as a result of the children's increased skills in understanding themselves, getting along with peers, and interacting with adults. Children are expected to gain problem-solving skills in these areas and to apply them as well as learning where to go for assistance. Teachers are expected to gain an understanding of the whole child, learning appropriate behaviors and group dynamics, and aiding the children in problem-solving. It is expected that parents will gain an awareness of their children's social and emotional growth and work with the schools to foster it.

Inservice and Materials

In the Focus inservices teachers received instruction and training in identifying, recognizing, and responding to feelings, empathy skills, values clarification with an emphasis on the process rather than the end product of valuing, problem-solving processes, uses of a variety of materials with affective content, and the ability to recognize, own up to, and eliminate self-defeating behaviors. We were encouraged to decide first on goals (what do you want to accomplish?) and to select materials to help us reach those goals. Materials must be open-ended and appropriate to the age level of children. I chose Science Research Associates material, Focus on Self-Development, Stage Three: Involvement, which contains a teacher's guide, photo boards, records, and dittos for various activities. (SRA, Note 3). This kit is appropriate for fifth grade and addresses subjects such as emotions, self-choosing, learning, responsibility, causes of behavior, conflict, rights, justice, social relationships, and problem solving.

I also use the Inside/Out films (1973), produced by the National Institute of Television.[3] These films, presented from the child's point of view, concentrate on emotional development and conflict resolution, treating such problems as the personalities of the bully and the joker; behavior such as name-calling, responses to dares, getting even; troublesome family situations, sibling rivalry, divorce, and death; and feelings such as the fear of being ridiculed, what one can/can't do, loneliness, belonging, and joy. The films enable the children to explore their affective development and that of others in a nonthreatening way through identification with the characters in the films. Each film is open-ended. They neither come to a conclusion nor contain a moralistic message.

The overall objective of Focus in the classroom is to help children understand their own self-development as human persons, to become aware of themselves, others, and their environment. Through this process children can be helped to discover their potential and the effects of their behavior and form a healthy self-concept or self-image.

The program breaks with a long tradition in mental health, that of intervention after maladaptive behaviors occur. Through teaching skills that promote mental health in young children, it is hoped that maladaptive

[3]Those films are available through the National Instructional Television Center, Box A, Bloomington, Indiana 47401.

behavior will be prevented and that the children will be better equipped to deal effectively with school (an environment which, in itself, presents situations and pressures that can lead to maladaptive behavior), and the stresses and problems of adolescence and adulthood.

Figures 1 and 2 present two developmental sequences, one that leads to maladaptive behavior and the other to the healthy desirable behavior which is the aim of Focus.

Let me give you a few examples of things I do as part of the Focus program and how they benefit me and the children. I begin with a brainstorming session with the children. I ask them to give me as many names or labels for feelings as they can think of and then list them on the board. "Mad" and "happy" are offered and then there is usually silence. I ask a few questions and as my students get the idea, all kinds of labels come forth. The following is a list generated by one class:

astonished	angry	scared	good
mad	surprised	"down"	bored
left-out	wonderful	"blue"	mad-cap
happy	cool	bad	weird
sad	special	super	disorganized
gloomy	worried	impatient	dumb
hateful	hurt	hyper	stupid
pain	jubilent	bogue	bold
frightened	O.K.	neat	frustrated
embarrassed	great	caring	depressed
leary	foolish	rotten	proud
lonely	queer	mixed-up	intimidated
insane	shy	fearless	pressured
fearful	confused	horrible	unimportant
funny	responsible	smart	tense
excellent	grand	superb	terrible
nice	amazed	excited	clumsy
glad	groovy	important	silly
violent	idiotic	nervous	careless
joyful	upset	"sick"	disgusted

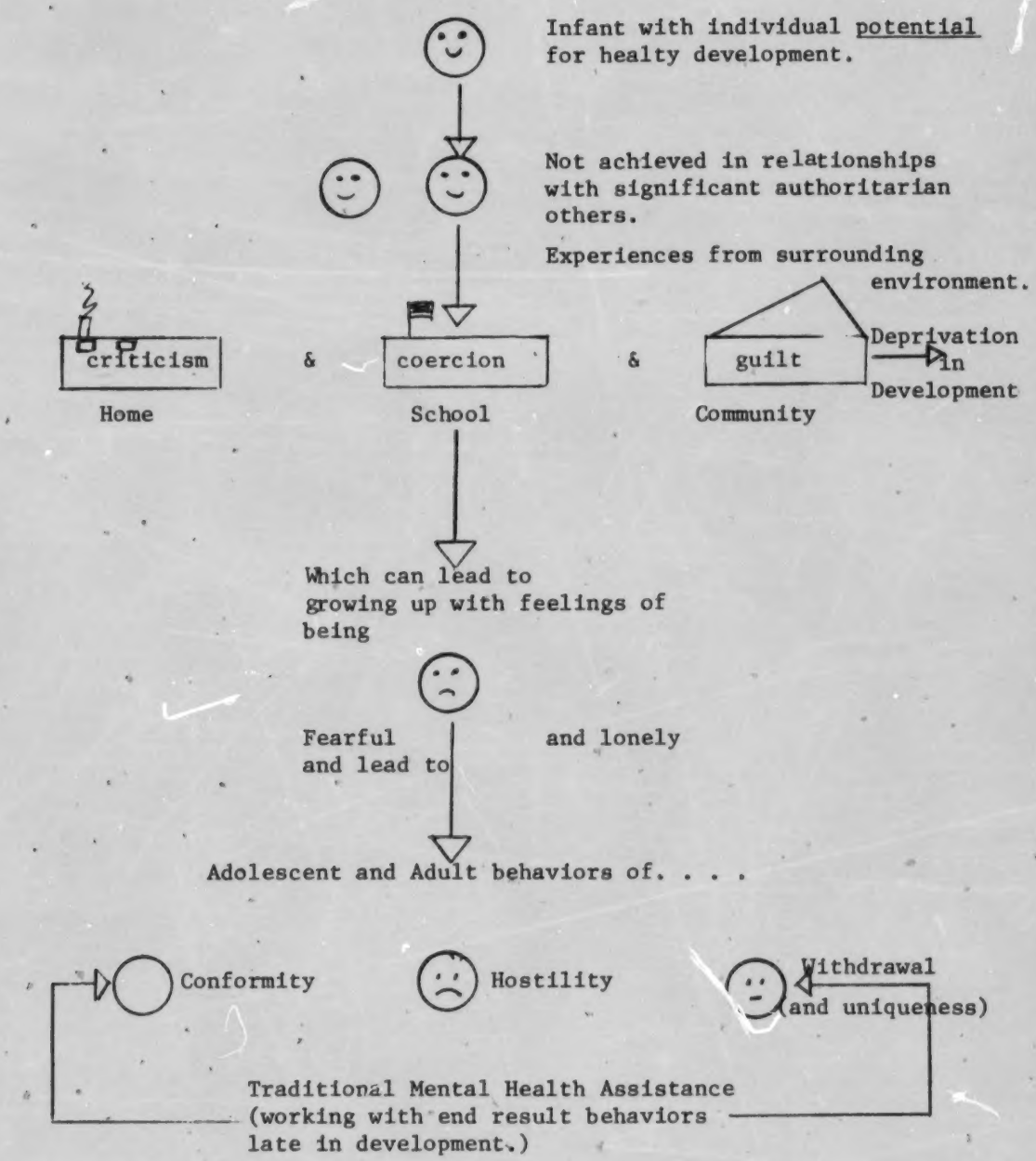


Figure 1. The Developmental Sequence Frequently Observed (Taken directly from Groves (Note 1). Reprinted with permission.)

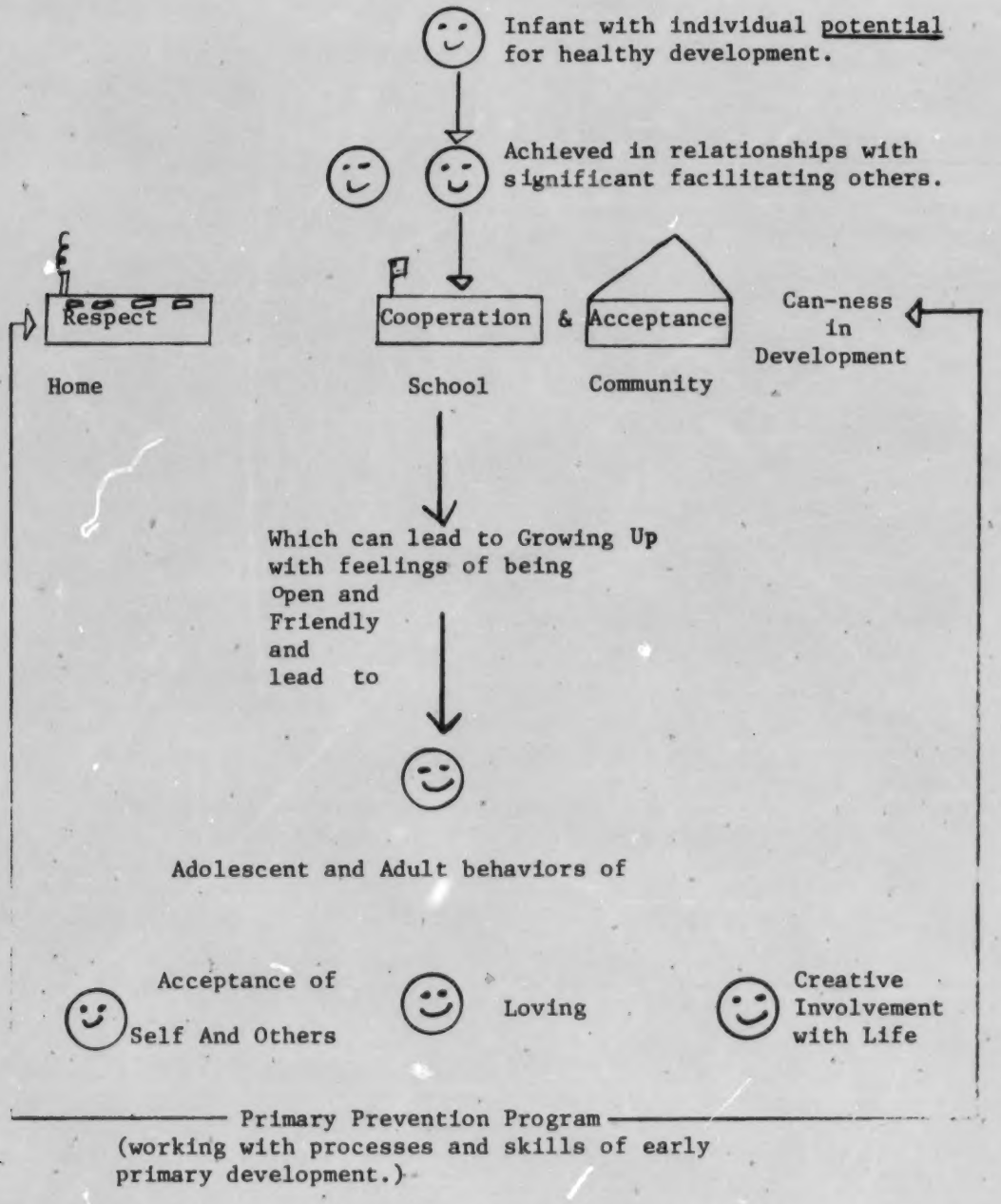


Figure 2. The Development Sequence which is the aim of Primary Prevention (Taken directly from Groves (Note 1). Reprinted with permission.)

It is good to have the vocabulary to express how you are feeling. It is especially good to find out that you are not the only person to experience these feelings--everyone does! One thing that develops out of this initial activity of naming and discussing feelings is the awareness that feelings are neither morally good nor bad--they simply exist. For children this is often a revelation, particularly in relation to anger, loneliness, fear, and other unpleasant feelings. Many children think anger is "bad" and fear is "shameful." As we continue throughout the year to discuss feelings the children and I become comfortable with them and feel free to let others know how we are feeling.

We learn a problem-solving process similar to the one from T.E.T., and use it frequently in many school situations. I make a chart of the steps and post it somewhere in the room for handy reference:

Problem-Solving Process

1. Identify the problem
2. What circumstances and behaviors led up to the problem?
3. What feelings were experienced by those in the problem?
4. Have you experienced something like this before? What did you do? Did it work or didn't it?
5. Explore alternatives for dealing with the problem. Think of as many as possible--even "far-out" ones.
6. Select one proposed alternative solution--a plan.
7. Test the plan--get feedback--evaluate it. Is it working? If not start over again.

Fighting is often a problem and as a group we use the problem-solving process in classroom meetings frequently during the year to work on this issue. Before Glasser, T.E.T., and Focus, I would resort to scolding, lecturing, taking away recess, isolating, or sending children to the office. These procedures did not help children learn anything about how to prevent fighting or better ways to solve disagreements. However, children can learn a great deal about the feelings people experience in fights, causes of fights, and better ways to deal with situations that cause fights through group discussions using the problem-solving process. Even if a handful of students seem to be doing the fighting, the whole class gets together for a discussion to help think of better alternatives. They learn much about

the way their classmates think and feel during these discussions and this promotes understanding and empathy that simply was not possible when I used the old methods. I, too, learn many things about the children from listening.

Frequently offered the responsibility for solving their school problems, children can learn through practice to be very good problem-solvers. This produces good feelings, confidence, and a sense of being in control of one's behavior and life. It develops socially responsible youngsters.

The following is an example of another kind of change that takes place. As we begin each year the class is composed of social cliques and possibly one or two loners. Nobody ventures out of their "friendship" group. One group may not like another group, resulting in put-downs and various other kinds of nastiness between the groups. The loners, of course, are miserable. Within a friendship group of two, three, or four, feelings are occasionally hurt and a "tiff" occurs. The reaction of the children involved is to be mad (a secondary reaction to feeling hurt, embarrassed, and so on) and then the whispering, storytelling, and name-calling starts. The injured party places blame on the perpetrator and within a larger group others begin to take sides. As others get involved in something which is not their problem, other fights break out. Nothing constructive is learned, the problem is not solved, feelings are submerged, and further hurts result. A truce is eventually brought about, usually through my intervention, but the tiffs occur soon again and an amazing amount of past history is continually rehashed.

As we go through the problem-solving process, however, through regular classroom meetings, and learning how to resolve conflict situations constructively, I see the children go through a gradual and progressive change and begin to see them talking out their feelings and perceptions and listening to one another when they have a falling-out. They discuss what happened directly, exchanging how each perceived the situation and felt about what happened. Bystanders who formerly would have jumped in to take sides, now mind their own business. Problems are resolved quickly with empathy, understanding, and apologies. The friendship is not only maintained but deepened. When this starts to happen it is a great moment for me.

It is also a great moment when the children begin to approach me either individually or in groups, to discuss a problem that involves me and what I am doing. They eventually do this with ease and trust, freely expressing the thought that a situation might be improved if I changed my behavior. We discuss it and their suggestions are often excellent, I change my behavior. Let me give you an example.

Two girls approached me one year and requested that instead of being required to do the language arts sheets called for in their contracts they do extra writing. Their reasoning was that they were bored as they already knew all the material on the language arts sheets and so learned nothing from them. Also they wanted to write poetry and requested permission to concentrate on this instead of some of the other forms of writing we were doing. I gave them permission to do both--skip the language arts sheets and write poetry. They seemed to know exactly what they were about. And indeed they did. I do not know much about poetry, but I do know enough to recognize unusual talent. I ran off dittoed copies of ten pages of their poems, sent them home to all the parents of the children in my room and a copy to the coordinator of writing skills of the district. Both girls received an invitation from the Board of Education to appear at one of their meetings to receive special awards for outstanding writing. Each had several poems published. The district writing-skills coordinator who is himself an outstanding writer told me that one of the girls had extraordinary talent. He came to my room to talk with her and when he left, he said, "I want to steal her!"

Before the Focus program I do not think I could possibly have known these youngsters well enough to really listen to what they were saying, nor would they have had the courage or the confidence to make such a bold request of me. The Focus program helped me to know my students, thereby raising my respect for children's wisdom, intelligence, and creative suggestions. Also, working with both girls on their poetry was one of the most pleasurable and exciting things I have ever done as a teacher. I served as critic, but they taught me far more than I taught them. I contrast what I see happen in my classroom through Focus activities with some of my own children's school experiences. Not infrequently one of my own middle-school or high-school children will experience anger, frustration to the point of tears, and great discouragement over assignments,

tests, or a teacher's arbitrary behavior. I suggest they talk it over privately with their teacher and hear, "No. That's impossible. I can't talk to them. They would just get mad." The real meaning behind these words, I believe, is that it is much too threatening for them to talk to many of their teachers because of the belief that teachers do not care to listen to their feelings. I also think that the feelings are so powerful from being kept inside too long that my children are really afraid that they would cry just trying to explain what is going on inside of them to the teacher. My older children have always enjoyed and learned the most in classes where their teachers encouraged participation of the students in decision making regarding the learning process, encouraged them to talk about their feelings, and treated them as honest responsible people.

Inside/Out Films

The highlight of the year for my fifth graders are the Inside/Out films. Watching the children who are totally absorbed in the unfolding drama I see smiles, frustration, anger, sadness, anxiety, and fear on their faces. Some speak out--"He is so mean!" "Why is she doing that?" "Oh, don't do it!"

Discussion follows each film and the children are eager to talk. The teacher's manual supplies a series of open-ended questions designed to encourage the children to talk about the questions raised in each episode, how they thought the characters felt, why they behaved the way they did, and the emotions they experienced themselves while watching. The films and the discussions help children to understand their own and others sadness, happiness, joy, fear, love, and hate. It is the sharing, the speculating, the expression of possible alternative behaviors, and the variety of decisions that could be made that reveal us to one another as fully human and draw us closer together in understanding and empathy.

An important discovery for me as a teacher was that adults see the films from a different perspective than children. It made me realize that my perceptions of what goes on in the classroom are not necessarily the same as those of the children. It caused me to stop making assumptions based upon what was going on inside me, which I had done almost automatically before Focus, and spend a lot more time finding out what was

going on inside the children.

For example, during the teacher inservice we viewed the film entitled "Breakup" in which Becky, a child of 9 or 10 is trying to cope with her parents separation and fear of divorce. Mother, Becky, and little brother go to the airport to meet Father, who is coming for a visit. Mother is anxious, distracted,and very impatient with Becky's questions about why people fall out of love and what will happen to them if there is a divorce. During the ride to the airport Becky fantasizes about the frightening consequences of divorce, revealing intense feelings of fear, anger, and guilt. These nightmarish feelings are contrasted with flashbacks of happy memories from days when her parents were in love and they were a united family. The film closes following Father's arrival. There is no way of knowing whether a reconciliation will occur or whether all of them will have to cope with the pain and fear of divorce.

Many of the teachers present during the inservice said that they would feel uncomfortable showing the film to children or simply would not show it. Those who felt uncomfortable expressed difficulty handling their own feelings with respect to the film and the subject. Those who would not show it thought it would be devastating to children from divorced families or those going through a divorce.

The Focus consultant said that experience has shown that the film does not upset children who have gone through a divorce. They have dealt with the problem. The children who benefit are those going through divorce and especially those who think their parents might get a divorce. Many children from two-parent homes live in a state of tension because their parents fight. They have learned to equate fighting among parents with divorce from the experiences of friends from divorced homes.

This has been my experience using the film "Breakup." Children going through a divorce experience visible relief talking about their feelings--fear, loss, insecurity, guilt, and anger. If they remain silent during the discussion, which is often the case, I believe they benefit from the experience of children who have survived a divorce, who talk about the feelings they experienced before, during,and after the divorce. It is these children who convey the message, "You learn to accept it; life stablilizes; you're able to go on and feel O.K. about yourself and your family after awhile."

One youngster said, "I thought I caused the divorce because I didn't do things right and I thought I was going to die. But I found out it was not my fault and some things are really much better now. My parents don't fight anymore and I get along good with both of them."

Children can talk easily about their enjoyment of good times and their feelings of anger but seldom about their fears. These are kept inside and they are hard to live with. It has been a revelation to see the change in children when they can talk comfortably about fears--get them out in the open, look at them, find that others experience them, learn to understand them better. Much tension and anxiety is relieved when children from two-parent homes are able to talk about parents fighting and realize, through the discussion, that this is a normal happening in families and does not mean that their parents will be getting a divorce. Several children in my class told me that after seeing this film they found the courage to tell their parents of their fears and this led to a family discussion and problem-solving session regarding matters that generated parental fighting.

The Focus Program inservice enlightened me as to the tremendous importance of children's emotional experiences and their effect on learning in school and life as a whole. The Focus consultant provided ongoing support and assistance as I implemented the program into the curriculum. Through attending to emotional as well as intellectural and physical development I am a teacher in the fullest sense of the word --reaching and responding to the whole child.

PART 2

How My Strategies Work With Three Problem Behavior Types

How My Classroom Functions and What Behaviors Concern Me

I teach on the third floor of a small school build in 1929, in East Lansing, Michigan, adjacent to the Michigan State University campus. The staff consists of nine teachers and approximately 180 students from kindergarten to fifth grade. Many of the students' parents either teach or are students at the university. Parent involvement in the education of their children is high, and many volunteer their help in the classroom and in school activities. An important aspect of our total school "family" is fostering an attitude of mutual trust and respect.

My classroom functions semi-democratically. Class size varies between 25 and 28 students. The children participate in making the rules; in classroom meetings, they determine room arrangement and job assignments, and work out solutions to problems concerning the group which arise within the room or any part of the school, at recess, and in coming to or going from school.

A rule which I propose each year is that no name-calling, put-downs (sarcasm), or ridicule be permitted. This has always been accepted and voted into the rules by the group. This rule allows the development of an environment in which each individual is free to be the person he/she is, promotes tolerance of and, eventually, greater acceptance of others, and fosters a climate in which all are free to learn. This is perhaps the most important rule in my classroom, and I enforce it. After a while, the children help enforce it.

A theme we discuss and explore all year is that freedom and responsibility go together. The children are free to sit where and with whom they wish, as long as they behave responsibly and do their work. Seating arrangements change frequently. The freedom to move desks fosters social growth, and provides me with important information about the social dynamics within the room. It also involves the children in relevant and sometimes difficult decision-making.

The children have considerable freedom to work in the hall, practice

plays or dances in an empty classroom on the second floor, in a classroom at the other end of the hall, and in the second-floor art room. Again, the concept that freedom and responsibility go together is constantly involved. A large number of classroom management responsibilities are handled by the children, including room clean-up. I do nothing for the children that they can do for themselves.

Reading, math, and writing are individualized. Work in these areas is contracted over two-week periods. Within a two-week period, each child has a required amount of work to complete in reading, writing, and math, at his/her level of achievement. Satisfactory completion of this amount of work earns the child a "meets expectations" and a green rectangle made from construction paper on the class contract chart. From September through December, each child must make some decisions after achieving a "green" during a contract period. They may elect to do more contract work. If they elect to do four extra credits, they earn "exceeds expectations" and a blue rectangle on the chart. Seven extra credits earns a "super exceeds" or "blue-plus" (blue rectangle with a star) on the chart. If a child elects to stop at "meets expectations," I ask him/her what he/she would like to do for the remaining time. Sometimes the child has a project in mind, and I suggest how it can be turned into "extra credits." For example, if the child wants to draw, I encourage this, and suggest a written story to accompany the drawing. This becomes an extra credit in writing. There is no symbol for failure. If a child does not complete the amount of work necessary to earn "meets expectations," he/she receives nothing; the child's contract chart has a blank space on it.

After a child completes two consecutive contracts successfuly, he/she receives a certificate indicating achievement of this goal. The certificates are attractive, and are signed by me and the principal. As we move through the year, I gradually raise the required number of extra credits for a blue and a blue-plus, and I lengthen the contract to three weeks, and finally to four.

Throughout the use of contracts, I teach the children how to plan their work on a daily basis in reading, writing, and math, in order to meet the goal each has set for him/herself. We stress organizational skills, personal goal-setting, effective use of time, and self-evaluation.

The children correct all their own work except their writing. I correct writing, and discuss rough drafts individually with each child. A final draft of each piece of writing is made following corrections. I think it is important to mention that with writing, I always allow and encourage the children to choose their own subject. In our writing workshops, we do a lot of "brainstorming"--talking about past experiences, feelings, hopes, and dreams. We also look at pictures and posters, and everyone gets a chance to say what he/she thinks is happening. When a child can't think of an idea, two or three classmates volunteer to "brainstorm" with him/her until an idea is settled upon. The discussions are very open-ended (no right or wrong answers), there is much interaction, and the children help one another by reading a first draft and constructively criticizing, proofreading, and correcting it. They also share finished drafts by volunteering to read them to the class. The friendly, supportive, interactive environment, free of imposed subjects and "right or wrong" notions, is very important, I believe, in encouraging children to freely express themselves in written form. I correct all completed rough drafts so that the final draft conforms to rules of our written language.

Children have little or no conception of the hard work, long hours of reading and study, thinking and research, writing and rewriting underlying a finished book or a magazine article. We try to develop an awareness of how a person becomes a writer. The emphasis during workshops is on getting the flow of ideas on paper. Concern about spelling, sentence structure, and grammar is de-emphasized. We talk about this first writing-down of thoughts, ideas, and experiences on paper as a rough draft. I show them what a well-known writer's rough draft looks like--a mess. Once the thoughts are on paper, we begin the process of rewriting and polishing, applying all the proper rules and conventions of our written language. The group enthusiasm and the knowledge they gain about one another's interests, feelings, past experiences, hopes, and dreams serve not only as a powerful catalyst in motivation for writing, but aid the building of group cohesiveness, mutual appreciation, and support.

Answer booklets for math and answer sheets for some language arts activities are kept on a large table in the room. Answer materials must

be used at this table only, so that they are not lost. Immediate feedback on work done is therefore available. The question of cheating is always raised by the children when they learn they will be responsible for checking and scoring their work. I ask them, "Who will be hurt if someone copies answers or changes answers?" They conclude, "Only the person doing it." When they are correcting language arts sheets, I ask the children to correct wrong answers at the correction table and say the correct answer to themselves three or four times. In other words, I want them to learn the correct way as they are doing the exercise.

In scoring math, I ask the children to use a fraction--the number correct over the total number--which is converted to a percentage. Work done correctly is emphasized--not work done incorrectly. On all math papers, 80% is required before moving on. If this is not achieved, the child must do a sufficient number of incorrect problems over again to achieve 80%. A child may rework incorrect problems to achieve 100% if he/she chooses. The emphasis is always on learning and mastery.

I have been using contracts for fiv years. During the first year, a child who did not complete the required amount of work was given a red mark on the contract chart, symbolizing failure. Several children had a series of reds on the chart. The total chart contained many greens, blues, and some blue-pluses, William Glasser's notions about failure prompted me to eliminate the failure symbol or label during my second year of teaching. I was greatly influenced by Glasser's thought that in school, the options should never be allowed to run out. Thereafter, when a child did not complete the required amount of work, I would just say, "You haven't earned a green yet." A blank space remained on the chart. I waited to see what the child would say or do. Almost every time this happened, the child would say, "Can I do the work over the weekend?" I'd say, "Sure, that will be fine." The next Monday morning, we started a new contract. Sometimes the child would complete the old contract over the weekend, or part of it. I'd say, "Well, you're almost there. If you work on the new contract during class and finish up the old one for homework, you'll be all caught up."

Since I have eliminated the red (or failure) label, rarely has a child not completed a contract. Furthermore, when the failure symbol was

eliminated, a greater number of children elected not only to get a blue-plus every time, but elected to do many more extra credits than were needed to get the blue-plus. A blank space on the chart really bothers a child. I never say anything about it, and neither does the child. But I know it bothers him/her, because he/she cannot leave it there. The work is eventually made up. During the first year, the reds remained. The children who received them even bragged about them a little. I occasionally make an exception to the usual contract procedure, as will be shown in later case studies.

During the second half of the school year, many of the children are extending themselves, earning many extra credits beyond a blue-plus. In February, I introduce special reading, writing, and math awards for each contract. I ask the children to suggest how many extra credits they think someone should have to do to get an award in each category; together, we decide. Then I make the awards from colored poster board and ribbon. The amount of work completed continues to increase. The special awards are highly prized and eagerly sought. A significant number of children try to get at least one special award on each contract. If a child earns a special award in reading, writing, and math (we call this a "triple"), the whole class spontaneously applauds.

Several times during the year, I talk with the children about the certificates and special awards. I want them to understand clearly that I do not give them awards. They earn them. From my viewpoint, there is an important difference. The award or certificate is simply visible evidence of their own effort and achievement. It is longer lasting than verbal recognition or a pat on the back.

The children in my classroom are encouraged to help and teach one another. There is much interaction. I give few tests. When I do give a test, I ask the children to sit separately and do the work completely on their own, so we can find out what each person has mastered and what each may need to work on. I try to create an environment free of tension or anxiety. Learning should be exciting and fun. We have a good time. We work hard, but we talk and laugh a lot.

Twice a year, each child, his/her parent or parents, and I have a conference. I ask the children to show their parents their work, explain it, talk about what they have learned, the progress they think they have

made, and what they feel they need to work on. I lead them with questions. Then I talk about their strengths and growth from my viewpoint. If there are problems, we talk about them candidly, and then I ask the child to suggest a plan for working on the problem. The parents are invited to give their suggestions, and I offer mine. We work out a plan. Conferences are pleasant and constructive.

My expectations socially, academically, and behaviorally for each child are very high. I tell them this the first day of school. That is all I say about expectations. Recently, I had a conference with a gifted child and her parents. After the child talked about her learning and total school experience thus far that year, I complimented her on her achievement. She grinned and said, "Well, I knew you expected me to work hard. You didn't say it, but I knew it. We all know it." I thought about that and was pleased. I have great faith in the ability of each child and a total commitment to seeing that every child in my class succeeds.

Now that I have given the reader the structure within which I operate, I'll move on to a description of three troublesome kinds of behavior that concern me the most: hostile-aggressive (acting out, overt disturbance), passive-aggressive (frequent, habitual irritating behaviors that cause others to express anger or act out), and withdrawn failure-image (withdrawal from interaction and acceptance of failure). The hostile-aggressive child and the passive-aggressive child are disruptive of the classroom routine and interfere with the teaching-learning process. Their behaviors indicate, however, that they are actively involved in the classroom scene--they are still "in there fighting" from a psychological viewpoint. The withdrawn failure-image child's behavior is the most severe. This child causes no disruption, nor does he demand the teacher's attention. He has given up by dropping out.

Before detailing my development of strategies and my perception of a change in the role of the teacher, I wish to focus on a device which all three behavior types--hostile-aggressive (HA), passive-aggressive (PA), and withdrawn failure-image (WFI)--resort to: the "I don't know" response to questions from the teacher. It gets a kid off the hook, providing the means to avoid the acceptance of responsibility in unpleasant or threatening situations. Sometimes I think the response, "I don't

know," really means "You figure it out, teacher--read my mind," especially with a PA child.

Early in the year, I tell all the children that responding with "I don't know" on matters of behavior or interpersonal problems will be unacceptable because they are intelligent human beings capable of thinking. (This does not apply to questions regarding academic matters, as it is often an honest response.) However, I also tell them that all other responses except put-downs are permitted in problem-solving situations, even "I don't like you" or "I think you are a mean or unfair teacher." Once we know how people are honestly feeling, we can proceed to work things out. It takes a while to develop trust among the children that I mean this, but gradually this trust does develop. It provides the ground and the springboard for open resolution of problems. It also helps a child to believe that he does have some control over what happens to him in the classroom, a significant measure of power.

Experience in the classroom has been an important factor in developing strategies for the HA, PA, and WFI child. I remember well my first year of teaching. Almost all of my mental and emotional energy was devoted to learning the curriculum, teaching it reasonably well, and classroom management. All of this was easier the second year, so there was some energy available to devote to a few needs, other than cognitive, of the children. With continued experience, I internalized the curriculum, procedures, teaching strategies, and classroom management, until much of it became second-nature. During my third year of teaching, I concentrated on developing a strategy for HA children. The next year, I worked on a strategy for the WFI child. It wasn't until my fifth year of teaching at the same grade level that I attempted to come to terms with the PA child and, fortunately, through a lucky coincidence, received the help I needed.

My perception of my role as "teacher" also changed. When I began teaching, I saw teaching cognitive skills as my primary and predominant responsibility. Responsibility for teaching children manners and how to behave properly belonged with the parents. In my mind, this division of responsibilities was fairly sharp. But it has changed in response to big changes in society, and the realization that many parents, particularly single and working parents, need all the support they can get from the

school in the very difficult task of childrearing.

The three chapters which follow have a similar format. After a brief description of the problematic behavior, I then address a strategy used to address and redress it. Case studies then follow, to show how the strategy operates practically. In all three strategies, I address behavior first, then academic achievement, because I have found that only when the child begins to gain control over problematic behavior is he motivated and able to channel his energies to do schoolwork.

HA children are very physical (external expression) and, in most cases, good athletes. The strategy that worked for me involved going through the child's strength in athletics--a physical activity. With PA children, there is no clear pattern. Some PA children I've taught were good athletes, or were talented in art, writing, or music (internal expression). Some wanted to be good athletes. The WFI children in my classes have been helped through working through their strengths in art, writing, and music--internal strengths. With the HA and the WFI children, there appears to be a relationship between the behavior I wished to help the child change, and the strengths through which change occurred: acting out (physical) and athletic ability for the HA child, and withdrawal and internal strengths of art, writing, and music for the WFI child. The PA child neither acts out or withdraws, and strengths can be physical, internal, or both. Each of us, no matter who we are, have HA, PA, and WFI tendencies, but I ask the reader to keep in mind that the strategies presented in this book were developed for children whose behavior patterns in school represent an extreme and habitual adoption of one of these tendencies.

I also wish to emphasize that in the case studies I try, to the best of my ability, to assess the child's perception of his school environment, and, to some degree, his inner state. In no way do I wish to imply that parents are to blame for the child's problems in school. This would be unfair and a frightful presumption. Parenting is an extraordinarily difficult task, and we all need all the help we can get when our children have problems.

Parents are entitled to their own lifestyles, values, and beliefs. However, it is possible that sometimes a family's lifestyle, values, and commitments may generate a conflict for a child who is of his own genera-

tion, and spends his school hours among peers who have different life-styles, values, and privileges. Should a conflict of this nature arise, and should it result in poor performance and/or lack of social integration, then I try to uncover the nature and, if possible, the cause of the problem, and share this with the parents. My interest lies in helping children redress school problems so that they can learn as much as possible. I limit myself to this area, working cooperatively with parents in mutual trust and respect, but avoiding interference in family life which is, rightfully, the parents' domain.

I consider it a moral responsibility as a teacher to help a child assume responsibility for his own behavior, develop self-awareness, and learn to interact with others so that he will be able to succeed.

In conclusion, I must add the disclaimer that even though the case studies are obviously drawn from children I have taught, the physical descriptions and other salient identifying characteristics of both the child and the family have been altered to preserve their privacy. What the reader will get, nonetheless, is the essence of the problem, presented as accurately as I can from my own inferences about what I believe is going on within the child, and a strategy to alter it. All of the strategies offered eliminate judging, blaming, punishing, power struggles, and invasion of a child's or family's privacy. They provide an environment and structure within which the child can develop and use his own strength and creative powers to work out problems and move toward greater success in school and life. It is my hope that the strategies will also provide a means for significantly reducing teacher stress.

Chapter 4. The Hostile-Aggressive Child

Description of Behavior

Hostile-aggressive children exhibit a number of disruptive and socially unacceptable behaviors. They push, shove, kick, hit, bite, intimidate or threaten others, call them names or ridicule them, and damage or break property. They antagonize others and are easily angered. Hostile-aggressive (HA) children in fourth and fifth grade seem to come to school for only two purposes: to make life miserable for the teacher and other adults in the school and to be with friends, or if they don't have any, to make some.

The self-image of a HA fourth or fifth grader--whether or not he is accepted and/or admired by the peer group--is poor and is evident in his behavior. Until he completes third grade, the adults in the school get much more openly upset about the behavior of the child than he does. In fact, he may appear quite happy part of the time--smiling, involving himself in activities, exhibiting a good bit of spontaniety. By fourth or fifth grade, however, a HA child no longer seems happy nor smiles very much. He is wary, registers less emotion on the face, and appears more indifferent. He begins to socially "play it cool," often swaggers, frowns, grumbles a lot, or may become more sassy. He suffers more severe consequences of his misbehavior as he is treated more like a young adult. What may have been treated lightly or gently in the first three primary grades is dealt with with a much heavier hand by school staff and parents in fourth and, particularly, in the fifth grade.

Children who act out anger either in the classroom or elsewhere in the school setting must be dealt with as they can destroy a classroom, making it impossible for a teacher to teach and for other students to learn. All of the HA children I have taught employed the following tactics toward teachers and other authority figures: manipulation, rationalization, psychological game playing, (see Ernst, 1972), and blaming others, behaviors which cause the HA child to become alienated from teachers and peers.

As a HA child moves through elementary school from kindergarten through third grade, he establishes a position of leadership among his peer group (especially with the other boys) if he has athletic ability and can fight well. He maintains this leadership role through intimidation. The other children, whether they like him or not, are generally afraid of him.

During the fourth-grade year resentment of peers toward the HA child increases noticeably. Children at this age verbally express resentment about being intimidated; they begin to reason and think more for themselves, and have a desire for more room to display and receive recognition for their individual talents. In a class which combines fourth and fifth graders I have seen the leadership role of the bully fourth grader decline sharply. The fifth graders are fiercely possessive about their role as leaders in the school.

A fifth-grade bully also loses power with peers who are no longer willing to put up with him. They form group friendships and the group exerts a strong social force. It is safer to oppose a bully when five or six others support you. In the lower grades, friendships are more on a one-to-one basis.

However, while a HA child loses power over the peer group by fourth or fifth grade, he often gains increasing power to disrupt a classroom and demoralize a teacher. Fifth graders often openly challenge adult authority and rules. A child who continually tests or breaks rules, is sassy, uncooperative, resistant, and defiant in his relationship with the teacher, is watched, sometimes with amusement, by the rest of the class. If teachers handle this child poorly, they may lose control over the whole class or, at best, divide the class into two groups: those whose sympathies lie with the teacher and those whose sympathies lie with the disruptive child.

In dealing with my first HA fifth grader I used a trial-and-error approach, dealing with each situation as it arose. I just wanted him to stop what he was doing. I was much more concerned with his interfering with my teaching than I was with helping him solve his problems. Also, the traditional authoritarian methods under which I had been raised and trained to use were not effective. A HA child today is not intimidated by teachers, principal, or parents. Lectures, suspension of privileges, suspension from school, or, in many cases physical punishment

(which I would never use) have no lasting effect. Although force used to be effective, it is no longer a viable alternative both because of legal and psychological implications. Both suspension and expulsion involve too much time because of the need to exercise due process and in the interim the teacher is still faced with coping with the behavior problems of a nine or ten year old who is challenging the adults in school and at home to stop him if they can. The HA child often creates a three-ring circus. Feelings overheat. Parents blame the teachers, teachers blame the parents, and principals often wind up in the middle. Sooner or later both parents and teachers blame the principal. Meanwhile, the HA child continues doing his thing while watching the adults fight.

While I was eventually able to control my first HA child using a hit-and-miss approach, I did little, maybe nothing, to help him alter the HA behaviors outside of my room even though I spent a disproportionate amount of time with him. Others who deserved their fair share of my attention were unable to get it. I also expended enormous sums of energy in the process of controlling the child, experienced frustration and emotional upset, and became emotionally involved in the child's problem. I worried, fretted in school and out, and often left my work feeling depressed or angry with myself because the child's behavior had gotten to me and I had lost my composure.

During my second and third year of teaching fifth grade, school and problems of children in my class began to consume my life--I worked at it night and day, weekdays and weekends. A lot of my energy, at this point, was devoted to trying to change the behaviors of HA children, of whom I seemed to have a disproportionate number. I think they gave me credit for trying so hard and caring so much because by mid-year they had shaped up quite well in class, but outside the classroom they continued to be hostile aggressive.

By the end of my third year of teaching fifth grade I was beginning to feel tired and my enthusiasm for teaching was waning.

The class I had during my fourth year contained many problem children (not all were HAs but three were the most severe HAs I've ever seen and hope never to see again). During the first two months it was almost impossible to teach. I spent every day just trying to deal with disruption, fights, defiance, and a classroom full of students who were unable to listen,

follow directions or rules, or concentrate. I was beginning to feel very tired and discouraged. By the week before Thanksgiving vacation I thought, "Maybe teaching isn't for me!"

However, after the brief Thanksgiving break, the new techniques and approaches I'd learned through extensive reading and inservices began to produce results, especially with the HA children. I'm now in my seventh year of teaching fourth and fifth graders, and use a step-by-step strategy with HA children that helps them learn to behave responsibly and achieve a reasonable degree of success in school.

Causes of Behavior

A hostile-agressive child is acting out anger, which I believe is reflective of a poor self-image and an identity of failure resulting from an inability to satisfy two basic needs: giving and receiving love, and having a sense of worth. Angry behavior gets attention, but it also is a means through which a child attempts to control a situation or seeks revenge.

On the subject of basic human needs, William Glasser, (1975), psychiatrist and founder of the Institute for Reality Therapy in Los Angeles, California, says the following:

> First is the need to love and be loved. In all its forms, ranging from friendship through mother love, family love, and conjugal love, this need drives us to continuous activity in search of satisfaction. . .
>
> Equal in importance to the need for love is the need to feel that we are worthwhile to ourselves and to others. . .
>
> Thus, when we are unable to fulfill one or both of our needs, we feel pain or discomfort in some form. (Glasser, 1975, pp. 9-10)

Rudolph Dreikurs (1968), professor of psychiatry, Chicago Medical School states that all children seek a place in the group. Well-adjusted children attain this goal by conforming and making useful contributions. When this goal is not attained, a disturbing behavior is directed toward achieving one of four possible goals (in increasing order of psychological disturbance, the second and third particularly applicable to hostile-aggressive children): to gain attention, demonstrate power, punish or get revenge, or demonstrate inadequacy.

> The outstanding sign of the drive for power is the aggressiveness of such children. They do not respect order and discipline, they defy authority, and may become truant. They either press their demands forcefully or stubbornly refuse to do what is expected of them. They are often insolent. Socially they may be bullies, gang leaders, or lone wolves. . . .
>
> The most disturbing children are those who have given up any hope of being acceptable and accepted by adults. They feel--and most frequently are--disliked, abused, and hurt. They do not realize that they themselves provoke such treatment by anticipating it. They pose the greatest problem, both scholastically and behaviorally. They are violent and brutal, or sullen and defiant. . .
>
> The only group to which they may feel they belong is their own gang. They are ostracized by the "good" children and can find their status in society only by hurting others.(Dreikurs, 1968, pp. 42-43)

Some ideas about feelings that promote angry behavior in children are detailed in a National Institute Of Mental Health (Note 4) Booklet:

> To respond effectively to overly aggressive behavior in children we need to have some ideas about what may have triggered an outburst. Anger may be a defense to avoid painful feelings; it may be associated with failure, low self-esteem, and feelings of isolation; or it may be related to anxiety about situations over which the child has no control.
>
> Angry defiance may also be associated with feelings of dependency, and anger may be associated with sadness and depression. In children, anger and sadness are very close to one another and it is important to remember that much of what an adult experiences as sadness is expressed by a child as anger.

Fourteen-Step Plan

With HA fourth and fifth graders I have found that it takes approximately half the school year to teach the child how to behave responsibily in school and for these new behaviors to stabilize. (Note: The strategy is related to the behavior I want to help the child to change. Acting-out is physical. HA children are usually good athletes. Athletics is, therefore, the child's major strength and means of channeling aggression in appropriate ways that is suitable to the child's personality.) When the child is behaving responsibly I turn my full attention to the academic achievement of the child. Step 1 of the strategies involves the teachers' attitude regarding the HA, Steps 2 - 11 deal with changing the HA's behaviors essential for both social and academic success, and Steps 12 - 13 focus on promoting academic achievement.

The most important thing I have learned in working with HAs as well as other children who behave in ways destructive to their own wholesome development is not to get upset by their behavior. This has not been easy. It is contrary to my nature but it has enabled me to allow children to own their problems and suffer the natural consequences of their misbehaviors. It has made me tougher than I ever thought I could be--calmly, courteously tough.

Step 1. Develop "success-oriented" attitude. I believe that the key to working with a HA child is my attitude toward such a child. By fourth or fifth grade an HA begins to seek revenge against the adults in school or against the institution itself. This attitude is manifested by disrupting the class and commiting acts of vandalism both inside and outside the school (painting the walls and sidewalks, destroying playground equipment or trees and shrubs, breaking windows). It is necessary to first neutralize the hostile attitude toward authority figures. This requires firmness and fairness with respect to rules and doing school work but it also requires that I remove my ego needs from the situation, suspending the rather natural tendency to function directly as an authority figure.

As a teacher, I constantly ask myself, "What is my goal?" in working with a HA child. The answer is always the same--to help this child succeed in school. An HA child will reject what I have to offer if I use an authoritarian approach. I have found that I maintain control easily operating through an associative mode (in which student and teacher share responsibility for decision making)--the way equals or friends do. The only additional requirement is that I must have sound rational arguments and plans for the HA child. (Note: An HA child will deliberately try to elicit authoritarian behavior from me. He will bait, goad, and needle me in an attempt to elicit emotional responses that put him down, humiliate him, and put me in the position of asserting my authority. This is what he wants and expects because it reinforces his negative self-image. I must do the unexpected--remain calm, courteous, friendly, and firm regardless of how he behaves.)

Step 2. Make friends. I say hello to the HA children every morning when they come into the room, ask them how they are doing; I notice new sneakers, a new outfit, a new haircut, and say something that is appropriately complimentary. I also reinforce simple responsible behaviors I observe with friendly comments. All of these things are consciously planned.

Step 3. Establish classroom rules in a classroom meeting. On the opening day of school, I serve a treat to my new class--cider and doughnuts. Then we have our first classroom meeting. After the procedure and the rules are explained, I ask the children, "What makes a kid get up in the morning eager to come to school?" Then I wait for comments. I have trained myself to wait patiently for responses after I ask the children a question. If no one offers to speak to the question, I smile but remain silent. After a while, I might repeat the question or phrase it in a different way such as, "Were any of you really looking forward to coming to school today?" Two responses predominate in the discussion, year after year: (1) being with friends, and (2) having fun things to do.

Then I ask, "If you didn't have to come to school, would you come?" Many of the children say yes and I ask why. Some say no, and I ask them what they would do if they chose not to attend school. Responses include watch T.V., play, go downtown, and do nothing. I ask them, "Would you watch T.V. four hours, eight hours, how long? What would you play, for how long, and with whom? What would you do downtown? How long would you stay? Would you go alone or with a friend? How many hours a day would you do nothing?"

The discussion following the question, "If you didn't have to come to school, would you come?" is always interesting and sometimes vigorous. Almost all of the children eventually agree that they would come to school even if they didn't have to because any other alternative eventually leads to boredom.

The next step is to establish rules. I offer one temporary rule as we go through the process of establishing rules: no put-downs (sarcasm) or making fun of others (ridicule). This has always been accepted and eventually voted into the rules. I encourage the children to think about rules that will help us get along happily together and allow every one to learn. Everyone can offer suggestions, which are all duplicated so that each member of the class has a copy. Then the children discuss the suggestions with friends in small groups. I don't rush this process. The more discussion and thinking about the rules, the

better. When we meet as a whole, each suggestion is discussed and voted upon and becomes a rule by majority vote. (Everyone has a vote, including me.) The process of establishing rules takes one hour per day for three to five days. I facilitate the discussion by asking questions that encourage the children to think. Any time during the year, a rule can be eliminated, changed, or added through a classroom meeting by majority vote.

Step 4. Enforce classroom rules. For the first two to three weeks of school, I enforce classroom rules without exception by closely observing behavior in the classroom, halls, stairways, and at recess. I do this calmly and patiently. Whoever breaks a rule must identify the rule broken, evaluate his behavior regarding the rule, make a plan to follow the rule, and make a commitment to follow the plan. I'm relentless about this. It takes time and alertness on my part, but by the end of the third week of school, everyone in my room knows that rules will be enforced. The children also know that while I do not use punishment in any form, they must assume responsibility for their behavior. (See Glasser's Ten-Step Discipline Process (Glasser, 1974) for details of the procedure.)

The HAs usually wind up in the chair in the office within the first week of school, sometimes daily. They test the rules and what I do about broken rules all the way, even to having their parent called to take them home. I've learned not to reinforce the irresponsible behaviors of HA children by asking, "Why did you do this or that?" The strict enforcement of rules in a kind, courteous, nonpunitive, and calm manner is both frustrating and baffling to them. It is hard for them to be angry with someone who is courteous; and they can't stand, for very long, to be out of the classroom action. Fairly quickly, they learn that I mean business with respect to rules and, in the process, the relationship I have established or am establishing with them is not damaged because I am not punitive. Discipline is tied directly to the rules developed by the group.

Step 5. Further develop a friendly relationship. Once a HA child has accepted the fact that rules will be enforced, I work on furthering a friendly relationship with him. In addition to

greeting him by name when he comes in the room in the morning, I ask him how he's doing, find out what kinds of things he likes to do and what activities he enjoys outside of school, laugh and joke with him, share my interests with him. We gradually get to know one another as individuals and we laugh a lot.

All of this involves a consciously planned effort on my part, and it has a purpose. I have learned through experience that in order to teach HA children better ways to behave and social responsibility, a continuing friendly relationship is necessary. It gives me access to the child. My goal is to make contact with the person who has gained a reputation for being the poor student, the bad guy, or the trouble maker. I try to make contact through specific things I say and do: "Hello, Bob, I'm glad to see you." "Bob, how did your team do last night?" "Would you like to learn how to run the movie projector, Bob?" "I see you have new Adidas--they look sharp." If I think about it, there are many little ways I can become involved in a personal, friendly way with an HA child during the day. I have found that it pays off. Eventually, an HA child responds to this caring and personal involvement, the building of a relationship, because it meets, to some degree, his basic needs for love and worth. I can tell when the child begins to value the relationship. He initiates greetings, shares personal interests, and enjoys things with me. He also begins to offer to do helpful things.

Step 6. Teach HAs better ways to behave. At the same time that I'm enforcing rules and stopping inappropriate behaviors, I teach the children--especially the HAs--better ways to meet the expectations of the rules and to function in stressful situations. It took me quite a while to realize that if I say to a child, "When you get mad at someone, you will not be permitted to hit or kick," I must then help the child think of and often teach him acceptable ways to behave in that situation. I have learned through experience that HA children do not know how to behave properly in various school situations. The only way these children know how to obtain attention and recognition is by habitually misbehaving.

When I know that an HA child values our relationship, then I am in the position of being able to teach him better ways to behave. He

is willing to listen to what I have to say because he knows I am his friend. He has tested me thoroughly and found that I am tough. All along I reject his irresponsible behavior, but I do not get angry with him or punish him. For example, instead of his hitting or kicking, we decide together on some better alternatives--walking away and cooling off, verbalizing the way he is feeling right away and talking it out, coming to me when he realizes he is getting angry, requesting a time out, closing his eyes and counting to ten, slowly, then talking. I tell him that it is okay to be angry, that everyone experiences anger. He does not realize that his feeling of anger and the behavior that results are two separate things. It is important to make him aware of this by talking about it. His feeling of anger cannot be controlled, but he can control what he does about it--his reaction.

Step 7. Have classroom meetings. The mechanics of classroom meetings are described in Glasser (1975c). We have classroom meetings about twice a week, or more frequently, if needed. Each meeting lasts about 30 minutes. The purpose of classroom meetings is to get all of the children involved in a friendly courteous way in discussions of topics that they think are worth talking about (are meaningful to them) and to solve classroom problems (problem-solving). We learn and practice vital skills--listening, speaking, and thinking. Classroom meetings benefit everyone. HA children enjoy what is frequently a unique experience for them in school--they get to say just what they think in a nonjudgmental setting. They are listened to (this is often unique in itself), learn to listen to others, and learn that differences of opinion on many subjects are acceptable.

HA children often make very emotional sweeping generalizations. In the context of classroom meetings, peers feel free to disagree with or challenge (courteously) these sweeping statements, providing an HA child with the opportunity to examine his statements more carefully, and to learn how his behavior affects others. For example, an HA will make a statement such as, "Everyone is always picking on me," or, "The other team always cheats."

Fighting is a topic the children often want to talk about. HAs fight frequently in class, in the halls, at recess, coming to school,

and going home. If fighting is the topic for discussion, the following are considered:

> Why do people fight?
> What feelings are experienced by the various people in fights?
> Is anger "bad"? How can people handle anger constructively?
> What are alternative ways to handle disputes, arguments, hurt feelings, put-downs?

Many of the HA children I've had in my classes have been outstanding athletes. They were frequently involved in fights during games at recess. By working through the strength of their athletic ability and having classroom meetings, I've been able to do some effective work with HAs. For example, while co-teaching a combined class of fourth and fifth graders, we had a problem-solving session as the result of daily trouble during the kickball game at recess. There were multiple problems, which resulted in arguing, name-calling, and fistfights over choosing teams and captains, determining the line-up and playing positions, and about "ball-hogs" and poor sportsmanship.

Some children told how it felt to always be chosen last and have the good players indicate clearly that poor players weren't wanted on their team. Others complained that the same people always got to be captain, pitch, and play other favored positions. Some children said that they never got their turn to be up because certain players rushed and pushed their way to the head of the line (for kicking) every inning. Others said they didn't even join the game any more because others ridiculed them or called them names if they were put out by the other team or dropped the ball.

I asked them to come up with a plan that would eliminate the problems. It took two one-hour meetings, much talk and discussion, but they were able to come up with the following plan: A kickball sign-up sheet would be taken around to the three homerooms on the third floor; all the names would be put in a box, and teams would be selected for two-week periods (captains to be rotated among all the grades); captains would draw names out of a box, post names in kicking order for the two teams outside in the hall, and rotate pitching among those who wanted to pitch. The whole plan was made by the students and it worked remarkably well. We had a third

meeting on sportsmanship, and the children decided that calling names and put-downs were undesirable and that encouraging and complimenting one another would make the game more enjoyable for everyone. When this new approach was put into practice, the whole atmosphere of the games changed.

Gradually, a class can become a working, problem-solving unit as the realization grows that each student has both individual and group responsibilities. All of the children learn that they are capable of using their brains individually and as a group to solve the problems of living in their school world. This is not easy. Solutions they generate do not always work. Then they return to the task of searching for better ways. This is excellent preparation for life--for contending with the greater world in which certainty or right answers seldom exist, where cooperation among groups is continually called for.

The discussions are crucial for HA children, but how do the group decisions affect them when implemented? In the kickball example, the group worked out a plan that would allow all children who wanted to play to do so in a more supportive and fair atmosphere. An HA child who is an outstanding athlete and social leader finds that he has to conform to group decisions about how the game is to be played or be subject to instant group pressure to do so. Recess duty provides me with prime teaching opportunities. If an HA child becomes angry in a game, I intercede immediately, ask him and the person involved to step out of the game for a minute or two, and work out the dispute. The group-established rules provide the framework. Disputes are generally worked out quickly among the children involved, and they return to the game. No one is put down, preached to, sent to the office, or punished. I act as a facilitator. The children do the problem-solving. HA children go through this process many times, gaining skill in working out problems through discussions with their peers--not always calm or free of strong feelings--but nevertheless, discussions in which all involved can state their case, be listened to, and be required to listen respectfully to others. Understanding of other viewpoints and feelings grows. Out of this comes increased involvement with more and more

members of the group. After a while, the group learns to work together with increasing harmony until a stage is reached in which I have little to do but watch and enjoy the game.

Step 8. Involve child in helping roles in classroom. Remembering Rudolph Dreikur's (1968) observation that "all children seek a place in the group," and knowing that children who provoke a power struggle with adults or seek revenge do so because they have given up hope of ever being accepted by them, I decided to give responsibility to HA children and, while doing so, behave as though I were talking to the most responsible children in the class. For example, the fifth graders in our school are the safety patrols, and I'm in charge of the program. If I know that I will have an HA in my class, I'll call him a few days before school opens and arrange a meeting. When we get together, I ask him if he'll be the first patrol captain. If he says yes (the reply has never been no), I ask him to choose classmates (from my list) to complete his squad and to call and tell them what time they should be at school on opening day. I'm friendly and behave as though I have complete confidence in the HA child's ability to handle all these responsibilities. I see to it that he has a written list of what to do and the names and phone numbers of classmates he has chosen for his squad. Most fifth graders consider it an honor to be patrol captain. I have yet to have an HA child not live up to my expectations as first patrol captain. Also, he is usually so pleased to be chosen (twice I've had an HA child say, "You want *me* to be patrol captain?" with a "you-must-be-crazy,-lady" expression on his face) that our friendly relationship gets off to a roaring start. Within the room, there are countless ways I can involve an HA in assisting: running the projector, helping in science or social studies, pulling down shades or screens, getting supplies from the office, managing athletic equipment, running errands, or being a kindergarten reader. Being usefully involved in the life of the classroom helps to promote a sense of worth and establish a positive place in the group. It builds faith that an HA child is accepted and trusted by adults. All of this is often surprising to an HA child, but his response has been

very gratifying. I try to remember to say "thank you" or "I appreciate that" when he performs a service. In every way I can, I try to be warm, caring, and appreciative of him as a person. I treat him with respect, and in a courteous manner.

Step 9. Talk about appropriate versus inappropriate behavior. I discovered early in my teaching experience that children have misunderstandings about the morality of certain school behaviors. They often say they are bad because they talk, get out of their seat, or don't listen. We therefore spend time talking about appropriate behavior in a variety of situations in an attempt to get rid of these "good" and "bad" perceptions. I tell my class that talking is one of the most pleasurable of all human activities--it is not bad in itself, ever. Talking may be inappropriate in some circumstances--when I'm giving directions or explanations, during quiet reading, in the middle of a concert--at any time when listening is to their benefit and that of the group. Yelling and loud laughter are appropriate at certain times in gym and recess, but would not be well received in the library or during math. Standing up is never bad, but is inappropriate on a moving bus as it is unsafe. We discuss the acceptable and nonacceptable behaviors of our culture in all school situations, at football and basketball games, tennis matches, concerts and theater presentations, at the dinner table, and in relationships with the opposite sex (fifth-grade boys sometimes have to be told that it is not acceptable to go around swatting girls on the "fanny").

We also compare the acceptability of specific behaviors in different cultures. They are always delighted to learn that burping after eating in Oriental cultures is very acceptable. In the Netsilik Eskimo culture (which we study in fifth grade), a man will loan his wife to a hunter when the hunter's wife is ill, since life is a daily struggle for survival. A woman is essential on a hunting trip, as she keeps the hunter's clothing in repair so he will not freeze to death.

I repeatedly tell my students that they are not bad -- ever. HAs respond with great interest in these discussions. I

believe that distinguishing between appropriate and inappropriate as opposed to "good" and "bad" greatly benefits these children, who seem to label themselves and what they do as bad most of the time.

Step 10. Engage help of school staff. After an HA child is behaving quite well within the classroom, I ask for help from other members of the staff with whom he comes in contact: the principal, the school secretary, the music teacher, the physical education teacher, the art teacher, the librarian, and the custodian. Their support is crucial in teaching an HA child social responsibility. An HA must learn to behave responsibly in the special classes outside my room and everywhere in school. He also must learn to get along with many adults if the new behaviors are to be eventually internalized so that he can manage his own behavior.

I explain to staff members that I need their help, and tell them about the nonpunitive discipline approach I'm using and how they can reinforce what I'm doing in the classroom. I ask them to greet an HA any time they see him anywhere in the building, and to hold him strictly to behavioral expectations. Essentially, I ask them to be friendly but tough. If an HA child misbehaves in a special area class (music, art, gym), I ask his teacher to send him to the office to sit quietly until he is ready to follow the rules and behave responsibly. No discussions, no listening to his excuses or rationalizations, no show of irritation or annoyance--just send him out until he's ready to come back and follow the rules--all with a smile. The idea is for all of us to consistently deliver the message, "We want you to participate, we are glad to have you here--as long as you are willing to follow the rules"--and to hang in there longer than the child expects us to. It works!

Step 11. Have a special parent conference early in the year. After I've gotten to know an HA child and worked with him for a while, I have a conference with the parents, fully aware that the news of his disruptive and aggressive behaviors will probably not come as a surprise to them. A child does not usually become hostile-aggressive in school overnight. This is

an important conference. I prepare for it thoroughly. First, I make a point of being friendly and gracious, and next we share a few pleasantries. Then I tell them the strengths I see in their child, following with a description of disruptive behaviors manifested by their child. Finally, I detail the step-by-step plan I'm going to use to help their child to stop behaving irresponsibly and to learn how to behave responsibly. I explain the goal of each step in the plan and why I think it will work. Parents of fourth- and fifth-grade HAs are often defensive, but basically, they are discouraged. The child is usually out of control at home, too. Sometimes a parent--usually the mother, in my experience--has taken on her child's problems as her own, and often fights his battles for him.

I do let the parents know kindly but bluntly that we have two years (if he's a fourth-grader) and one year (if he's a fifth-grader) to turn him around, because if he goes to middle school with these disruptive behaviors, his chances for success are slim. His middle school teachers just will not have the necessary time to spend with him to help him correct them. I express confidence in the fact that if the parents and I work together on the plan I've outlined, we can succeed. But consistency of effort at school and at home is essential. Almost always, the parents are willing to work with me. They appreciate a well-thought-out plan, and especially my confidence that it will work.

I ask the parents to make school behavior and school work entirely the child's responsibility. These are his problems. If he comes home complaining that I'm mean, unfair, the worst teacher he's ever had--they should listen empathically for a while and then tell him that it's *his* problem, and he will have to work it out with me. Then they should change the subject and proceed with life at home. I give them a written copy of the discipline technique and help them use it at home.

I share with them frequently what is going on in school, progress that is being made. The mother often drops in to speak

with me or calls me on the phone. I do a lot of listening and make suggestions of things to try at home. I give her much encouragement in her struggles to allow the child to stand on his own two feet and suffer the consequences of his misbehaviors.

This is hard work. It takes time and patience. But it takes less time than I used to spend just trying to control an HA child, and far less emotional energy. It is a teaching process just like reading and math. The payoff for me as a teacher is that the child responds, learns to be socially responsible, begins to make academic progress, and begins to believe he is a worthy person and can succeed. This is personally the finest reward I can receive as a teacher. Needless to say, when an HA becomes socially responsible, the parents are very grateful.

Step 12. Work through strengths and interests in academics. From the beginning of the school year, I identify the HA's strengths and interests through observation, verbal and social interactions between the child and myself, and listening as an HA interacts with peers.

I make a point of letting an HA know that I value his strengths and interests and consider them worthy of pursuit. But more importantly, I do this within the group. The other children eventually follow my lead and lend their support. It is the latter that fosters both academic and social success for the HA. I try to build upon those things an HA child values, feels successful at, and finds meaningful.

The majority of the hostile-aggressive children I have taught have had little academic success in reading, writing, or math, or, at best, marginal success in one or all of these areas. Most HA children have a failure image, because they are achieving below grade level. They have given up or believe that they cannot meet the standards they have set for themselves or that others have set for them in the basic academic areas. A natural place to start with an HA child is one in which he has a great deal of interest. Usually this is athletics, and is one in which he is skilled. If his favorite sport is football, I will in many ways indicate, both in private conversations with the child, but most importantly within the total class, that I value both the child's interest in this game,

the skills involved in it, and the effort and practice it takes to become a skillful player. I also compliment the child for skillful execution of play at recess and ask him to keep me up on how his favorite team is doing during the football season. I encourage and help the child to find and read books about football. Our librarian, once alerted to an HA's special interest, is very helpful in suggesting books that might interest him.

Football can also provide a subject of interest for writing. As a class we often talk about exciting and sad moments in our lives, interesting and enjoyable things we do, our feelings about many things, important people in our lives--as part of the pre-writing stage. We try to develop an awareness of how a person becomes a writer. Where do the ideas and the subject matter come from? Children have little knowledge of the hard work, long hours of reading, thinking, researching, writing, and revising underlying a finished magazine article, short story, or book. With HAs I can relate this directly to the hard work and practice that it takes to become a skillful football player. An HA child has the opportunity to talk about his earliest memories of playing football as well as his feelings about specific players and games. This results in a wealth of ideas for writing. I encourage the child to get the flow of ideas on paper--a rough draft. Following this we concern ourselves with spelling, grammar, sentence structure, and punctuation. An HA child who has little success in writing usually says, "I hate to write," or, "I don't know what to write about." His handwriting is often poor, he cannot spell, and he does not have the vaguest notion of what capitals, periods, or paragraphs are all about. However, an approach which places primary value on what he has to say works. He begins to write. I correct his rough drafts, help him expand ideas, search with him for specifics that sharpen and add color to his writing, and then he writes a final draft. After he begins to believe he can write, that what he has to say is worth saying, that others are interested in what he has to say, and particularly after he begins to experience pleasure in writing, then he is ready to learn or internalize something about the structure and rules of our written language. If he writes and reads about football all year, that is fine. The goal is to motivate him to read and write and to achieve some success in the process.

If an HA child is having difficulty with reading, I help him find

books on subjects that interest him which are heavily illustrated, contain a simplified vocabulary, and, when possible, books that have tapes or records to go with them. Children who are poor readers generally enjoy following the words in a book while listening to someone read the book on a tape or record. They like to talk about the pictures. By looking for interesting materials together--even briefly--reading time can become pleasurable. He learns something, he has something to share, and in time he may stop saying, "I can't read, I don't like to read, I hate reading." I use comic books, catalogues, travel brochures, magazines, newspapers, anything that contains the printed word to stimulate an active interest in an HA child who feels he is a failure in reading.

As soon as an HA child is actively involved during reading time in an enjoyable way, I ask him if he would like to read a book a week to the kindergarten class (15-minute sessions). Usually he says "yes" with enthusiasm. I help him select a very easy book with many pictures. He reads it to me (motivation to read every word correctly is very high), and then I show him how to hold the book up and show the pictures to his young audience. It is surprising to many teachers how responsible and well-behaved an HA fourth- or fifth-grader is as a kindergarten reader. Here is a chance for a child with a failure image to do something useful, do it well, and be admired and looked up to. Kindergarteners think fourth- and fifth-graders are giants--in every way. An HA who fights with his peers is kind, thoughtful, at ease, almost paternal to kindergarteners.

Another strategy I use involves college students studying teaching who spend a day a week in my classroom gaining practical experience. I have all of my weak readers read out loud for 15 minutes per day with the college student in a place of their choice in the school building--in the hall, by the lockers, in the library. The child reads a paragraph, the college student the next. I tell the aide to make it fun, talk about the pictures, ask the children questions like, "What do you think about...". At first, the poor readers are reluctant or resistant, but after a while, they look forward to their reading time with the college student aides.

Step 11. Use the HA child's independence to achieve academic progress. I have found that if I am to teach an HA child and he is to learn,

we have to interact in a positive, comfortable manner. I must promote a friendly relationship of mutual respect and joint decision-making, being very careful to avoid behaving in authoritarian ways. HA children like to make their own decisions--they certainly don't check things out with adults when confronted with making decisions. They sometimes seek out or are influenced by the views and opinions of the peer group, but most often, they make decisions on their own. They often choose to or like to work alone. This strong streak of self-determination is frequently channeled in negative or destructive directions. But it is a strength. By conveying to an HA child that I value this strength--that it is good--I can begin to direct it in positive constructive directions.

In each academic area, I offer to help him get started and ask him to plan with me how much he's willing to try to do during a given length of time. For example, if math period is 45 minutes long and he habitually does nothing but get into trouble, he may be willing to try a few problems. I make sure he knows how to do them and when he completes the number he has chosen to attempt, I praise him for succeeding in his commitment. I then let him do something he enjoys for the rest of the period, as long as it does not interfere with others who are working. If he behaves well for the full 45 minutes, I'll tell him about it in a short appreciative way. "You handled math period well, Bob." As his good feelings and successes increase, he usually enlarges his commitments. He begins to work for longer and longer periods of time.

HA children tend to balk at doing school work, even when they are involved in decision-making. I use the following strategy if resistance to doing school work persists. We have a private conference--very calm and very friendly. It goes something like this:

(Teacher) "What is the purpose of school?"

(HA) "To learn." (The answer the teacher expects.)

(Teacher) "Who do you learn for?"

(HA) "You."

(Teacher) "No, I've already learned to read and write and do math."

(HA) "My parents."

(Teacher) "No, they've been through school, too, and know how to read, write, and do arithmetic."

(HA) "Me."

(Teacher) "Right. Who's the only one who can learn for you?"

(HA) "Me."

(Teacher) "Right. I can't make you learn and I have no intention of trying to do so. But I can help. I can teach you many things that will be for your benefit. But you don't want to read or write or do the math."

(HA) "That's right. I hate school!"

(Teacher) "If you don't want to learn, I can see why you hate school. It must be very unpleasant for you."

(HA) "Yeah, it is. It's as boring as you know what!"

(Teacher) "Well, I feel badly about that, but if you'd rather, I think we can arrange for you to stay home. I wouldn't be mad or upset. It would be okay, and that might be more pleasant for you."

(HA) "Oh, my parents wouldn't allow that! They'd make me come to school."

(Teacher) "I think I could arrange it so it would be okay with them, too" (said with sincerity, kindness, and complete confidence).

This was totally unexpected. A trace of alarm accompanied the next response.

(HA) "But I don't want to stay home! All my friends are here!"

(Teacher) "Well then, you have to make a choice. Stay home and have fun there, or come to school ready to learn. That's why kids come to school. How can you have fun in school when all your friends are learning and you're doing nothing but sitting and being bored?"

(HA) "But what would I do at home all day alone? That would be boring, too."

(Teacher) "Well?"

(HA) "Okay, I'll do my work" (resignation and disgust).

Walt (case study), having gone through this little scenario with me once, walked back into the classroom shaking his head and muttering, "She always has an answer for everything!"

Step 14. Integrate Step 1 (teacher's attitude) and Step 13 (HA children's independence. Suppose that an HA does not like to do math and has resisted or refused to do it through early elementary years. At one time, I would have used the authoritarian approach. "John, time for math. Get your book out and open it to page 10. I expect you to complete the page in the next 30 minutes." My words, my tone of voice conveyed the message,

"I am the boss, you'd better do as I say." What I found was that an HA found many ways to avoid complying with this directive--getting out of his seat for a variety of reasons, socializing, or disrupting. Sometimes he complained loudly, protesting that he didn't know how to do the problems, engaging me in a long and/or loud argument, or holding my attention for a good part of the math session by requiring me to teach him and do the problems for him. Or, he might just sit and stare at the paper.

I've found that working through the associative mode (teacher and child working cooperatively together as friend-to-friend) and appealing to the HA child's strong will to make his own decisions is an effective teaching strategy for promoting academic success. For example, in working on math, I'll say, "John, what page are you working on today?" "Ten." How many problems do you think you can do during the next 30 minutes?" He may respond, "Maybe 10 or 15." (The decision is his.) "Fine. It looks like they are all two-digit multiplication problems. Do you have any questions about them before you begin?" (Help is offered, but again the choice is his.) This approach has worked well. An HA is usually competitive. If he says he thinks he can do a certain amount of work in 30 minutes, he wants to prove he can do it. Even if he doesn't achieve his goal, I can comment favorably on the amount of work completed.

I have had a number of HA children simply refuse to read or do their math. These were not cases of mere resistance but of outright defiance. The first time this happened, I experienced a moment of panic. Here was this little child saying, "I ain't going to do math!" looking at me square in the eye with complete calm. He meant it! The easy way out for me was to send him to the principal, but then the HA child wins. Being sent to the principal was just what he wanted! A nice little chat about why he should do his math (he had been through that many times before) and he would have given all kinds of excuses why he could not do it: "I hate math, it's too hard, it's boring, I'm dumb, my teacher won't help me," on and on.

I knew that the problem had to be solved in the classroom. So I tried the following approach. I said, "Okay, Bill, you refuse to do your math." I took a clean sheet of paper and wrote, "I, Bill, refuse to do my math in school," and asked him if he was willing to sign that

statement. He was hesitant, but said, "Yes." I handed him the paper, which he signed. I then said, "Are you willing to do your reading this morning?" "No," was his response. I wrote on the sheet of paper, "I, Bill, refuse to read in school," and asked him if he was willing to sign that statement. He replied, "Why do I have to sign it?" I said, "I just want to know your intent." "Why?" he persisted. "Because once I know your intent, we can then decide how to proceed." He signed the second statement, but at this point his confidence began to erode. This was not working out according to plan.

I then said, "Bill, you have signed two statements, one stating that you refuse to do math in school and one that you refuse to read in school. Most of our mornings are spent reading and doing math. School is a place to learn these things. Under the circumstances, I think you would be happier if you stayed home in the mornings. I think I could arrange that for you." "No, I don't want to stay home!" Bill was alarmed. So I gave him a choice--if he came to school in the morning, he would be expected to do his math and reading. If he chose to stay home, he would not have to do either. He chose to stay and do his work--we tore up the signed statements. There were many rough moments and discussions about academic expectations after this incident, but Bill never outrightly refused to do his work again.

If Bill had signed both statements and decided he would rather spend the mornings at home, I would have said in a completely friendly manner, "Okay, let's try that. I'll miss you, but if it makes you happier, that is my first concern. If it doesn't work out, you are always welcome to come back." I would then explain to the parents what had happened and enlist their help. They should permit the child to carry out his decision--let him stay home. Be courteous, friendly, and respectful of the child's decision, but let the child know that in the mornings he will be responsible for amusing himself from 9:00 a.m. (when school begins) until school starts in the afternoon. The parents have things to do (work, housework, attend meetings, shopping, visit with friends), and will not have time to spend with him in the mornings. If need be, the parents should be absent from the home for a morning or two. One youngster, after signing an "I refuse to..." statement , elected to go home. His parent (who worked and had to leave her job)

came to pick him up. She was calm and courteous, according to our prearranged strategy. John spent six hours sitting in the car outside his mother's office, waiting for her to finish the day's work. He never refused to do his work again that year. Nor did he show any resentment towards me or his mother. The youngster did, however, learn a valuable lesson about the consequences of refusing to accept responsibility for doing his job, which was to learn in school.

HAs display anger. The case studies are arranged from lesser to greater display of emotion through behavior. The first one was Martha, a short-term problem, and the least severe. The next, Alan, exhibited great frustration, manifested through angry behavior. Walt is the classic hostile-aggressive rule-breaker who engages in a power struggle with the teacher for control. The final case, Joe, expressed the extreme of anger--rage. He had very little self-control.

Martha

This case study involves a child whose behavior assumed a hostile and verbally aggressive nature over a three- or four-week period. She seemed to be testing the limits of defiance. I include it in this chapter because her aggressive behavior was evidence of a considerable amount of frustration seeking release.

Martha was a fourth-grader in my combined fourth- and fifth-grade class. She was a fairly quiet, sober-faced youngster of better than average ability, inclined to be somewhat bossy and inflexible. She was an excellent reader, but did not like math. Martha's three girlfriends were all in another homeroom. This separation presented problems from the beginning. Martha and Lucy had been co-leaders of their group. With the separation, Lucy took over the group, and at recess and after school, Martha was frozen out. She complained to me constantly about how mean her former friends were to her at recess. I held several discussions with the group to see if I could help them work out their differences. Martha often provoked squabbles at recess. I worked with her separately on her behavior in an attempt to improve her interpersonal relationships. She continued to complain regularly. Finally, I told her that I had

taught her all I knew about how to get along with others, and she would have to work it out for herself.

There were several fourth-grade girls in my homeroom, but Martha expressed no interest in socializing or playing with them. She finally made friends with a vivacious, loquacious, and delightful fifth-grade girl, Joan. Martha was happy in class. She got along much better with her fourth-grade friends in the other homeroom, and worked hard until approximately mid-year.

All of a sudden, I saw a different Martha. She began to be sassy, asking, "Why do I have to do that?" whenever we began an activity. Her attitude was brazen--she refused to do math, interrupted me when I was speaking with another student, and argued on that student's behalf. It seemed as though every time I would be teaching, Martha was on her feet right in front of me, demanding to know why she or another student had to do what I was asking. This deliberate meddling was puzzling. When told to stop these behaviors, she came very close to being defiant, but each time backed down. I began to find notes on my desk that said things like, "You are the meanest teacher in the world," and, "I hate you!"

Then I heard she was causing trouble in the lunch program. The supervisor, at her wits' end, referred Martha to the principal. She gave the principal a hard time (being sassy and demanding, "Why do I have to?" to everything he said). I did not get excited or upset by these new behaviors, but they did puzzle me. I liked Martha, and remained friendly and courteous, but at the same time, I insisted that she follow the rules.

One day when I went to my mailbox before the afternoon session began, Martha was in the principal's office. The doors were closed, but the principal's voice could be clearly heard. He was angry, and read Martha the riot act. Even that didn't frighten Martha. She just kept on telling him that the grownups were unfair, the rules were dumb, and she didn't see why she had to follow dumb rules.

Later on, the principal came to my room. He said he was ready to throttle this kid, and did I know what was going on. I told him I had no idea. He said he had called Martha's mother and told her that if the misbehavior and the sassiness continued, he was going to remove Martha from the lunch program. Martha's mother was very upset. She had been

raising two children alone for several years, and was doing her student teaching in another town. It was critical that Martha eat lunch at school.

The next day, I took my class on a field trip. We travelled on the bus. We had several classroom rules about bus behavior (stay in your seat while the bus is moving, no loud singing or shouting, windows could be opened only with the bus driver's permission, no bouncing on the seats). Coming back from the trip, Martha, Joan, and several other children were sitting on the long seat across the back of the bus. I was sitting in the middle of the bus. Hearing a commotion, I turned around. All of the children on the back seat were laughing and bouncing up and down. I told them to stop bouncing and sit quietly. A few minutes later, I turned around again. Martha was bouncing up and down and looking at me with a broad smile on her face. She kept on bouncing. I said, "Martha, I told you to stop bouncing on the seat." She bounced a few more times and then stopped, still grinning at me.

I stood just outside the door as the children came off the bus. As Martha stepped down, I asked her to step aside with me. Her first comment was, "Why do I have to?" I said, "Tell me what rule you broke on the bus." She replied, "I don't know. You tell me," in an impertinent manner. I repeated my question calmly and courteously, and she repeated her answer. I then said, "Martha, you know what rule you broke, and you're going to have to tell me what it is." "Oh no I don't, because I don't know what rule you're talking about."

It was close to lunch time, so I took Martha to the office, and told her to sit quietly in a chair until she was ready to tell me what rule she had broken. When she was ready to do that, she could come back to the room. She sat down in a huff, folded her arms across her chest, and glared at me, grim-faced. Martha did not appear in the room before the bell rang for lunch, but she came to the room at the beginning of the afternoon session and started to go to her desk. I asked her if she was ready to identify the rule she had broken. More protests of "I don't know, you tell me." So I told her to go sit in the chair in the office until she was ready to tell me the rule she had broken. There was protest, then tears, "I really don't know--you're so mean--you don't believe me, but I really don't know. You tell me!"

I took Martha to the office. She was crying and putting on a show of being very hurt. I repeated, before leaving, that she could come back to the room as soon as she was willing to state the broken rule. She sat there all afternoon. The secretary stopped me as I went by the office on my way to recess. She was concerned and said that Martha had been crying a lot and saying she would never be able to get back to class because she didn't know what rule I was talking about. The secretary was empathizing with Marth and she wanted to know if I really wanted Martha to continue to sit there. I assured her that I did and said, "Don't worry, she knows the rule. She's a lot tougher than you think." I went out to recess. Martha sat in the office all afternoon. At the closing bell, she went home.

I had planned to call Martha's mother (Ms. W.) that evening, but she called me before I had a chance to call her. She was upset. She told me that Martha had come in from school crying, telling her that I wanted her to tell me a rule she had broken on the bus, but she didn't know that rule, and that I had made her sit in the office all afternoon. Ms. W. said they had talked about it for a long time with Martha sobbing and nearly hysterical because I was being so mean. I told Ms. W. exactly what had happened on the bus, and what had been going on in class for several weeks prior to this incident. I assured her that I was being kind and courteous to Martha--that I was not punishing her in any way--but that Martha was playing games--why, I did not know. I assured her that Martha did know the rule she had broken, and I encouraged her to tell Martha to come back to school and work *her* problem out with me. Ms. W. did say that Martha had been argumentative, whiny, and very hard to get along with at home during the past month. She complained constantly that Ms. W. favored her sister, and that she was "unfair, unfair, unfair!" I then asked to speak with Martha. Martha sobbed into the phone that she didn't know the rule she had broken, and asked if I wouldn't please tell her. I said, "Martha, your mom is a busy lady--she has a lot on her mind. The problem on the bus is *your* problem--so you work it out with me tomorrow in school--understand?" "O.K.," she replied.

Martha walked into the room the next morning. I asked her if she was ready to work out the problem. She maintained that she didn't know

the rule she broke, and insisted I tell her. I said, "Let's go--downstairs!" She exploded--I was unfair, mean, nasty, hateful. . ."Let's go, Martha." She was furious, but she came downstairs and sat in the chair. I left without a further word. I passed by the office at 10:30, on my way to recess duty. Martha popped out of the office. No tears, a calm, smiling face. She said, "If I tell you the rule I broke, can I go to recess?" "Of course, Martha. Business as usual as soon as we work out the problem," I said with a smile. "Okay," she said very calmly, "I was jumping up and down on the seat of the bus." "What do you plan to do about that in the future?" I asked, still smiling. "I won't do it any more." "Fine, have a good time at recess." Out she went, and all the misbehavior, sassiness, and testing of me, the lunch room staff, and the principal absolutely ceased.

I have never seen such a dramatic change of behavior in one of my students. The principal was amazed, as was the lunch room supervisor. So was I. And the most interesting thing to me was that Martha thought I was wonderful. We got along beautifully--better than ever. She began putting notes on my desk telling me I was the best teacher in the whole world, and how happy she was to be in my class. I called Ms. W. to tell her that everything had worked out fine.

Several weeks later, I had a parent conference with Ms. W. She told me that Martha had been very happy and cooperative at home since the bus problem was solved, and that she had had a very happy school year. Then she told me that she was in love with a wonderful man. They planned to marry and move to another state at the end of the school year. Martha told me about the impending move. She didn't want to move--she had friends, she loved her school, she wanted to be a fifth grader and a safety patrol here, and she wanted to have me as her teacher again. She did not speak of her mother's remarrying, nor about her future stepfather. So I talked with her about the adventure of moving, stressing all the positive things I could think of. As we talked about it, she began to show some enthusiasm for the move. I realized that during the period of Martha's disruptive behavior, she was trying to cope with significant changes in her life and the life of her family. The way she behaved was an outward manifestation of her inner turmoil.

Alan

Alan was a fourth-grader in my combined fourth- and fifth-grade classroom. He had many strengths--high intelligence, excellent coordination and athletic ability, and an attractive physical appearance. He was not a happy child in school, however; he had a quick temper and a reputation for provoking fights. He was often sullen, and quick to place blame for fights on others. During his early years in elementary school, Alan was a leader of the boys. From comments made by his former teachers and my own observations, I gathered that he intimidated his peers. They were afraid of his quick temper, and preferred not to cross him. In my class, he had difficulty establishing his place among the peer group. The fifth-grade boys held the leadership position, resented Alan's attempts to assert himself, and generally ignored him.

As a beginning fourth-grader, Alan appeared to me to be an angry child. Not accepted by the fifth-graders, and unwilling to associate with the small group of fourth-grade boys, he was isolated. Two of his former friends were in another homeroom. He responded negatively to me--would not look at me in the eye, did not want to come closer than three feet, did not want to help, and recoiled at being touched. He often looked my way as though he were doing something he shouldn't be doing.

Knowing that Alan's strength was math, my principal suggested that I talk with one of his former teachers who had had the most success with him. She told me that Alan had been a troublemaker--he fought, did some nasty things to kids, and had a terrible temper. She kept him in line by not letting him do math (which he liked) if he was naughty. I decided to let Alan work on math as much as he wanted to; this was a strength and a favorite academic task. I let him correct and score all his math work. I knew he changed some answers, but I did not think this was all that important at the time, as he excelled in math. Alan needed an avenue for success. He needed 100s, and progressed rapidly into fifth-grade work. He was proud of his achievement, and was eager to show me his progress. I praised him for his success, and encouraged him.

At recess, Alan was a bully and a loudmouth. In kickball, he played hard, threw the ball very hard, argued, and ridiculed others who were put out or who dropped a ball. He got into many fights, but was

very careful about doing so when an adult wasn't looking. One day, after morning recess (I was not on duty), the children told me he was crying--that he had been in a fight. He came in and sat at his desk in the corner (he chose this seat) with his back to the room. His posture was rigid. He wouldn't talk to me or look at me. I stooped down by his desk and quietly asked him what was wrong, but he wouldn't talk--just said, "Nothing," and remained rigid, with his head down.

I had been thinking about contacting Alan's parents, and after this incident, I arranged a conference. His mother appeared anxious and worried. His dad greeted me and smiled, but he, too, seemed uneasy. I'm sure both parents would have preferred being somewhere else. I told them that Alan had a problem, and that maybe, if we put our heads together, we could help him solve it. I told them all the strengths I saw in Alan: he was intelligent, handsome, well-coordinated, a good student and athlete--a child who could do anything he wanted to do in this life. But he was having a difficult time relating positively to peers and adults. He seemed angry and isolated too much of the time. My feeling was that he wanted to be able to make friends and be liked, but he didn't know how to go about it. The techniques he was using were not helping. I felt that the essence of the problem was his inability to express or even verbalize feelings with the exception of anger. Perhaps he couldn't label his feelings. I kept emphasizing from time to time that the problem belonged to Alan.

After 20 minutes or so (during which time I'm sure I convinced the parents that I really liked Alan, which was true), Alan's father said, "I'm not sure I can say this very well, but are you saying that this problem that Alan has in getting along with people isn't our fault?" (meaning "we parents"). I said, "Yes, you are two fine people who obviously care a great deal about Alan, but sometimes children get themselves into tight boxes in spite of good parenting simply because of the fact that they are individuals and perceive the world in their own unique way." Alan's father seemed relieved. Both parents talked freely about Alan's behavior at home. He didn't have friends. They had gradually stopped coming to the house, and the parents treated Alan with kid gloves because he became angered easily.

I suggested the possibility of counseling for Alan, but his father

was leery. He said, "But what if he won't go? And if we suggest it, he will think something is wrong with him." I agreed that initiating counseling was very delicate, and therefore suggested that we work on the situation ourselves and see what happened. I proposed that I work on helping Alan label, express, and talk about his feelings in a nonevaluative, nonjudgmental manner. His dad said, "You mean his feeling about everything?" I said, "No, just his feelings about what happens in school." (Note: This is important. Parents are concerned about invasion of family privacy, and legitimately so. I try to confine my efforts to helping children work out their school problems, as this is in my area of legitimate concern. If parents request help with a child's problems at home, I offer suggestions that seem appropriate, or refer them to consultants on our district staff who have the expertise that fits the situation.) I then suggested that they do the same at home: encourage Alan to talk about anything and everything, especially his feelings, without judgments or evaluations. In other words, listen and listen and reflect back to him what you hear--the feelings. I also suggested that his father spend some time each day with Alan, just loving him. Alan needed to be touched--hug him, sit him on your lap and talk and read, tousle his hair, wrestle, lots of man-to-man touching and laughter. I'd let them know how things were going, and encouraged them to let me know how things went at home. I was intuitively certain that feelings were somehow the key to the problem.

I gave Alan a good deal of friendly attention, increased responsibility as a helper, and permission to work out of the room in designated places. In our classroom meetings we talked about trust, the fact that freedom and responsibility go together, and explored appropriate and inappropriate behaviors in a variety of meaningful situations. We also viewed an Inside-Outside film once a week or every 10 days. During the discussions following the film, we explored and labeled feelings. Alan rarely spoke during these discussions, but he did listen.

Alan responded well to the responsibility and trust I gave him. He would smile when I praised him for something he did well. During our friendly exchanges or when I praised him, he did begin to make eye contact with me, but he still did not want me to come too near or touch him. When I observed that he was smiling more in class, I was encouraged.

One day at recess (when I was on duty), an argument erupted in a kickball game between Alan and two other boys. It led to name-calling and a fistfight. I took the three boys aside and asked them to tell one another what happened. The other boys, both fifth-graders, talked openly and Alan told his side. They had all contributed to the fight, and Alan had started it. I asked them to express how they felt at each step leading to the fistfight. Alan said he felt "mad." The other boys said they felt mad, put down, and had their feelings hurt. I then asked them what they could do other than fight and call one another names if a similar situation arose in the future, and they came up with some good ideas, such as expressing how they were feeling, walking away and cooling off, or doing a play over if they couldn't agree. I then asked if they could apologize to one another, and each of the two fifth graders readily said, "I'm sorry," to the two other boys. Alan refused to say, "I'm sorry." So, I complimented them on a good problem-solving session, and suggested to Alan that if he felt like it at a later date, he could always offer an apology.

Things went well for a while. I made a point of complimenting Alan on his excellent kicking or catching, and suggested to him if he now and then complimented a less-able classmate in kickball for a good kick or catch, or even a good try, that it would really encourage that child to hang in there. He began to do this, and I always reinforced these behaviors with a supportive comment. As his good sportsmanship increased, Alan seemed to increasingly enjoy the games.

A few weeks later, the children reported that Alan and a fifth-grade boy, Joe, had a fistfight in the hall on the way back from recess. Alan and Joe came into class angry, so I asked the class to read quietly for a while, and took the two to an empty room down the hall. I asked them to tell one another what they thought had happened, and how they felt about it. They had long been antagonistic to one another. They both said they were "mad." I asked Alan if Joe had hurt his feelings through his remarks and he quietly said, "Yes." They both expressed their reactions to being put down, teased, having the other call him names and make fun of him for a long time. Alan was more verbal than he had been before. I told them I thought they were grand guys, very talented in many ways, and that maybe they could both be "winners." I asked them to think of alternative ways to handle their difficulties, and suggested that they tell each other

how they feel right away when trouble starts. Joe suggested they walk away from one another whey they got mad. Alan suggested they not put one another down, and then, out of the blue, he said, "I'm sorry, Joe." That was an exciting moment. I had never heard Alan say, "I'm sorry," to anyone. Joe then said, "I'm sorry, Alan." I asked them if they felt better and they both said, "Yes." We went back to the room.

From here on, Alan blossomed. He began offering to help his classmates with their math, and he volunteered to help clean up the room. (Previously, during Friday clean-up, Alan always refused to clean up anything except the area right around his desk.) He was an excellent sport at recess, encouraging his classmates. No more loud mouthing or fights. He began smiling much more and was happy in class, and he began making friends. He started making me little pictures, offering to help, bringing up math papers with one or two errors, and getting closer to me frequently to tell me about different things. One day, when he had come up to me three or more times to ask about some new math work, I realized he was standing very close to me, and he seemed very at ease. It occurred to me that perhaps he had a reason for the frequent trips to my desk other than wanting math help. I was sitting at my desk, so while I explained the new work, I put my free arm around his waist. He smiled and looked right into my eyes as we talked--I think for the first time. Thereafter, I'd tousle his hair as he went by, or put my hand on his shoulder now and then. Alan wanted to be touched, and he was a happy boy.

For the remainder of the school year--about four months--Alan was a delight. He loved school, got along beautifully, learned to laugh and joke with his classmates, and excelled in everything. School was a good place to be. Alan was in no hurry to go home at the end of the day. The principal commented to me one day, "What has happened to Alan? I never see him any more, except in the hall, and he seems so happy."

Alan had only one fight during those remaining four months. He punched a child in Mr. R.'s room, right in the face. Mr. R. was very upset with Alan. He came to my room and asked me to come down the hall with him where the two boys were. Alan looked terrible--withdrawn, sullen, defiant, but hurting, and Matt was crying. Mr. R. said that Alan and Matt had been fighting. He had told them to stop, and when Matt put his hands down, Alan had hit him in the face.

I asked the boys to talk about what had happened. I then asked them to tell one another how they felt during the exchange of insults and fighting. It came out that Matt had thrown the first insult at Alan. Alan said he was mad. Following an exchange of insults, they started fighting, and when Mr. R. ordered them to stop, he threw the last punch because he was still mad. Then he said that he felt badly about this, because Matt wasn't expecting the blow. I expressed the thought that perhaps Mr. R. was especially upset because he felt responsible for the fact that Matt got hit after he stopped fighting. Mr. R. said, "Yes, exactly, I feel badly about that." I asked the boys to talk about anger and punching, and how they might handle their anger in the future under similar conditions. They did, and then apologized to one another. Matt said his face didn't hurt that much any more.

Alan was quite subdued for a while, but he bounced back and had no more trouble that year. Some time after the fight between Alan and Matt, Alan told me that Mr. R. had complimented both of them on how well they were treating one another during games at recess. Alan was obviously pleased by the compliment. His parents reported seeing a much happier open boy at home who was easier to get along with, and who was being understanding of and agreeable with friends who were coming to the house again.

Walt

In this case study, I will not be describing the behaviors and experiences of a particular child, but those of a classic HA child who every teacher will recognize. Walt is the master rule-breaker who engages in a continual power struggle with the teacher and all the adults in the school. He is a good athlete who establishes a position of leadership among the peer group (especially among the boys) through intimidation and as a result of his reputation for being a good fighter. By fourth or fifth grade, his reputation within the school is that of the bully, one who is belligerent and quick to take offense.

Walt has little or no respect for authority or rules. He wants to control or be the boss, and is arrogant, verbally abusive, contemptuous, and occasionally defiant to get his way. He often ignores or pretends he doesn't hear what the teacher says. When he is in a good mood, Walt may display an amiable personality, but only as long as he gets his way.

I use Glasser's (1974) discipline process with Walt, step-by-step, and without any deviation. It usually takes four to five months for Walt to become convinced that rules will be followed. He fights the process every step of the way, spends many time-outs at his desk or sitting in a chair in the office, thinking about a plan to get himself back into class. I ask Walt to put his plan in writing and sign it. Walt usually pushes the teacher to the extreme of sending him home, although rarely more than twice. As much as he resents discipline, Walt usually decides, after having gone home twice, that he would rather stay in school.

Sometimes after breaking a rule, Walt will look at me and grin. The message is, "What are you going to do about it?" (the power struggle). I don't get upset by this, and have disciplined myself not to show irritation (the natural reaction). At first, Walt takes a time-but after deliberately breaking a rule in my presence, knowing that I see him do it, and being challenged, therefore, to do something about it. This is one of Walt's ways of trying to control my behavior. I simply say, "Walt, please take a time-out at your desk. When you are ready to make a plan to follow the rule you broke, and as soon as I have time (I may be in the middle of an activitiy or otherwise occupied at the time), we'll discuss it."

If, later on in the discipline process, Walt continues to break a rule deliberately for the purpose of forcing me to do something about it (the grin, while looking at me, is the clue), he is sent to the office to see the principal. He is made aware beforehand that continuation of this kind of power struggle will result in the consequence mentioned above. Once Walt is made aware of this, I do not hesitate. He goes to the office. Walt usually ceases this particular type of behavior after hearing what the consequence will be. He does not want to go home, because he can't stand being out of the classroom action for long and nobody in school is yelling at him or is in any way upset with him. It is especially important not to listen to Walt's rationalizations and his attempts to place blame for his irresponsible behavior on others. Don't listen to his reasons why he broke a rule--this is what he wants you to do, and if you fall for it, he will keep the conversation going until he provokes you to anger or to putting him down. Just say, "What rule did you break?"--calmly, courteously, and persistently.

The first step, then, is to make Walt realize that rules will be followed, always in a calm, courteous way. Be friendly but tough.

If Walt is a good athlete, use this strength to help Walt learn that rules are necessary to getting along in school. Let's assume that Walt really values football and is a talented player. In our school, football at recess and lunchtine is played according to the following rules: (1) no tackling or shoving to the ground; (2) one-handed touch only; and (3) no rushing the passer. In the classroom meetings, the children had decided that if a player broke a rule, the penalty was to step out of the game for 30 seconds (the child was to do the counting). If a player broke a rule twice during one playing session, he was out of the game for that session. If a player repeatedly broke the rules during several sessions, he could be barred from playing football for a week, at the discretion of the teacher on recess duty.

If I'm on recess duty when Walt breaks a football rule (or a rule in any other game), I call him out of the game immediately and, in a friendly way, ask him, "What rule did you break?" Then I ask him to tell me the consequence, and leave him to count the 30 seconds. That's all I say and do. After a while, I just have to call him, and

he puts himself out of the game for 30 seconds, saying, "I know!" or nothing. This is a teaching process. It takes time and persistence.

When another teacher is on recess duty, Walt is often sent to the office to sit for the rest of recess, or has recess taken away altogether for periods of time, or is set to the principal for breaking rules or making mouthy comments. When this happens, I hear about it from Walt and tell him. "You know the rules, and you know how to keep them, so you are choosing to be sent to the office." It's his problem.

Usually, Walt learns to follow rules quickly when I'm on recess duty because he values recess, he is a good athlete and achieves a great sense of satisfaction through his outstanding skill, and Glasser's discipline process works. Walt knows exactly what will happen if be breaks a rule when I'm on recess duty, but what I do is not punitive. This is the secret. So he learns, and our relationship grows stronger.

If he starts to miss a lot of recess while other teachers are on duty, I ask him. "Is your behavior helping you?" He usally says, "No," and then I ask him if he can come up with a plan to keep the rules during every recess. He has to make the decision to keep rules and be respectful to other teachers on recess duty if he wants to play in the games.

Once Walt is following rules fairly consistently in my classroom, I engage the help of all the adults in the school with whom he comes in contact: principal, music teacher, gym teacher, librarian, art teacher, and school secretary. Their support is critical because we have to move out of the classroom into the wider environment of the school. I tell them about the nonpunitive discipline approach I am using, strictly adhering to the expectations of the rules, spelling out clearly behavioral expectations, and involving Walt as a partner in group activities. What I request of them is to give Walt a friendly "hello" any time they see him anywhere in the building, give him opportunities to be of assistance, and hold him to the rules. Essentially, I ask them to be friendly but tough with Walt. If he misbehaves, I request that they ask him to sit quietly in the office until he is ready to come back and behave responsibly. No discussions with him, no listening to his excuses, no show of irritation or annoyance--just send him out until he's ready to come

back and follow the rules--all with a smile. The idea is to hang in there longer than Walt expects us to. It works!

Walt is habitually late to school--one of his lesser problems in school, but one that is irritating to me because of the disruption it causes. Walt makes a grand entrance, usually as I am attending to routine morning business or giving instructions. He slams the door, stomps to his desk, greets his friends, and throws himself into his seat. He shows not the faintest awareness that he is interrupting me or the class, but he certainly does get attention.

Once I see that Walt plays this game, I handle it in the following way. As he begins his grand entrance, I ask him in a friendly, calm manner to go outside and come in the proper way. He goes out, slams the door, opens it, and starts in again, grinning at me. Before he has taken two steps into the room, I say, "Walt, take your seat, please," very matter-of factly, showing no anger or annoyance. Later, when I can speak with him privately, I ask him, courteously, "Why were you late?" His favorite response is, "My Mom overslept and didn't get me up on time." There are lots of others: he couldn't find his shoes, he forgot him lunch and had to go home to get it, he had to walk the dog, and so on. I then ask him if he can think of a way to get to school on time all on his own. He says, somewhat reluctantly, "Yeah, set my own alarm clock." "Fine," I say. "But it's broken," he replies with a grin. I express proper sympathy and suggest that he ask his mom to get him a new one. I ask him every day for two weeks, or longer, if necessary, if he has gotten a new alarm clock. Every day he says, "No, I forgot to ask my mom." I then ask if he can think of a way to remember to ask his mom. He says, in a grumpy voice. "I'll remember!" The next week, I persist with my friendly inquiries--"Did you remember to ask your mom?" Eventually, he gets tired of my friendly inquiries and starts coming on time. When he is on time, I compliment him briefly. When he is late, I ask him, "Whose responsibility is it to get you to school on time?" He finally decides that I am not going to give up (this is not the kind of attention he wants when he is late), and eventually comes on time to school fairly consistently. Walt does not like to hear the word "responsibility" over and over, especially when it is used in a friendly, courteous way.

When Walt is following rules fairly consistently, I then turn my full attention to his academic progress. During the acting out stage, Walt has a negative attitude towards school and normal academic activities. When his behavior is under control, he has energy to direct in more positive directions. This energy I seek to channel into doing school work. By this time, Walt and I have a fairly good relationship. He knows I am not punitive, and even though he knows I'm tough, he also accepts the fact that I'm fair.

I take into consideration three things I've learned about Walt as I approach the matter of motivating him to do school work. First, he resents and resists me if I behave in an authoritarian way (i.e., tell him what to do, how much to do, and when to do it). Second, he lacks organizational skills. Third, he has a poor sense of time. Therefore, I ask him to plan his work with me on a daily basis and give him responsibility for making decisions. "How many math problems do you think you can do on this card during math time (forty-five minutes)? Estimate how many pages you can read in your book in the next thirty minutes." At the beginning of a writing workshop, I ask Walt, "During the next forty minutes, how much space on that page do you think you can cover--a quarter, a half, the whole thing?" Whatever amount he chooses at first, I support, and check up to see if he has done it.

It is necessary to help Walt get the specific materials he will be working with ("Let's see, you will need . . .") and sometimes produce them (a math card, a book, a sheet of paper and a pencil) after he has decided on a goal for each 30 to 45 minute period. Once he had decided how much work he thinks he can do, and he has all necessary materials on his desk, he is ready to begin. Walt usually responds well to this way of approaching work and time. He is making the decisions as to how much work he thinks he can do, but he usually welcomes the organizational help. His level of resistance to doing school work slowly drops off as he begins to complete work within small blocks of time. Eventually, as his successes increase, he chooses to expand the amount of work he thinks he can do within a given amount of time.

During all work periods, I periodically check on Walt to ask him how he is doing. If he is making progress, I make a simple supportive comment such as, "Five out of seven two-digit multiplication problems done

correctly--nice! I like the way you are lining up the columns evenly." These supportive comments, offered as frequently as warranted, are a critical part of the strategy to help Walt succeed academically. If I keep reinforcing his positive behaviors, Walt begins to repeat them and to seek praise.

If he isn't making progress, I say something like, "Let's see, suppose you did. . .," or "Oh, I see the difficulty, if you do this, then. . ." The main thing is to keep our interactions positive and friendly, keep him doing the work, involve him in the decision-making, provide the structure to help him start and complete something, and encourage his efforts with small amounts of sincere praise. I find that if I praise too much too soon and make the praise personal ("*You* did a great job with that math paper") it boomerangs. He many not be willing to accept this if *he* doesn't believe it, and may respond defensively ("No I didn't, It's terrible!"), sometimes even crumpling up the paper. So, I try to direct my remarks to *progress* in the work at hand, and move on to someone else quickly.

When the class is about to move to another activity, I alert Walt early and make him a partner if possible. "Walt, in five minutes we go to the gym. Would you keep an eye on the clock for me and let us know when it is time for us to go?" I try to engage Walt in useful activities frequently, in order to build his sense of contributing within the group.

After he begins to make daily progress in getting his work done, and is following the schedule, I sometimes put my hand on his shoulder (touch) when asking him to alert us when it is time to go to music, or whatever. Like most HAs, Walt doesn't want to be touched, but as everything improves--he follows the rules, begins to find his place as a worthy, trusted, and responsible member of the group, and begins to make substantial academic progress, there comes a time when he does want to be touched. This is a matter of intuition--a sensing that the time is right. A big clue as to the timeliness for the desire to be touched is his behavior while working. When he allows me to come close (doesn't move away), when there is no resistance, when a small comment of praise draws a smile, when he says something like, "Look, I finished a whole math card today," or "My composition is finished. Can you correct it now?" --that is the time.

At the end of a work period, I check with Walt about where to put the materials he used. He gradually learns, with considerable low-pressure guidance, to restore materials to the proper places after use, and to keep papers organized in his desk.

As one of Walt's primary passions in life is football, I work through this interest and strength to develop his skills in reading and writing. If he reads stories about football and writes about football all year, that's fine with me. He's reading and writing--that's the important thing.

Classroom meetings and problem-solving sessions enable Walt to verbally express his thoughts, ideas, and feelings, as well as provide the opportunity to listen to those of his classmates. Through frequent classroom meetings, Walt grows in his ability to consider situations from the viewpoint of others, and in his ability to think.

In no way do I wish to leave the reader with the impression that helping Walt learn to behave responsibly and improve his self-esteem is easy or a continuous success story. It isn't. On the contrary, it is terribly hard work. Walt does many things to provoke my displeasure. There are times when I completely lose my composure, and banish Walt to a chair in the office when his behavior oversteps my level of tolerance or my ability to exercise patience. In these situations, I make Walt aware that he is being summarily banished because I am angry and need time out from him.

On the whole, however, working with Walt is a very satisfying experience, thanks to Glasser's discipline process. As Walt gives up his disruptive and obnoxious behaviors, a very likeable and intelligent person reveals himself.

Sometimes I have had Walt in my class for two consecutive years--as a fourth and fifth grader. Over a two-year period, applying the kinds of strategies presented in this case study, stablized responsible behaviors were achieved. One year with Walt is not enough. It seems to me that having the same teacher for two years is not important. What makes the difference is the consistency of approach over at least a two-year period.

Walt is also passive-aggressive. Hostile-aggressive children are very often also passive-aggressive, which is a more indirect way of expressing anger. The approach I used with Steve, who is a case study in the passive-aggressive chapter (Chapter 5), is identical to what I would do with Walt.

Joe

Joe was a youngster who acted out so continuously in school--both physically and verbally--that rage, rather than simple anger, was the emotion often displayed. He was unteachable, unapproachable, and out of control. He caused enormous disruption of classroom activities, drained his teachers' energies, and provoked many confrontations and fights with his peers.

Joe spent half the day with my co-teacher and half the day with me. I arranged a conference with Joe's parents after it became clear early in the year that it was going to be impossible for me to teach and the other students to learn until Joe gained control over his behavior.

During the conference, I tried to keep the conversation centered on Joe's problem in school--aggressive behavior that was making it impossible for me to teach and the other students to learn. As we talked, it became very clear that Joe's angry behavior in school was the result of a sharp conflict between values and experiences in the home and in school. Joe's parents were committed to cultural traditions and values very different from those of the majority of Joe's peers, and to a life style that was almost exclusively family oriented. For the parents, the world of sports and athletic competition was anathema, and they wanted Joe to have no part of it. Joe, on the other hand, wanted to be a professional athlete more than anything in this world, in spite of the fact that he participated in athletics only at recess and during gym, was not well coordinated, and lacked skill. His mother could not understand why we simply did not make children keep quiet, sit in their seats, and learn what we taught them. She blamed the school and the teachers for Joe's aggressive behavior in school--claiming that he learned to behave this way because of our excessive emphasis on competition, especially in sports--and for his lack of achievement. Until this time, Joe's mother had had almost exclusive responsibility for Joe's upbringing and schooling. This was his father's first school conference.

Joe's mother emphasized that aggressive behavior was not permitted in their home, and that she and her husband valued intellectual pursuits--reading, music, art, science, history, and so on. However, I was clearly getting a double message as I listened to Joe's mother. As she continued to talk and, with her husband occasionally interjecting a comment, it became clear that Joe

was rebelling against long-established patterns of family activities and procedures, and that her attempts to exert her authority and get him to do what she wanted him to do required increasing verbal anger. She was clearly angry, and I got the impression that her methods of maintaining control over Joe at home were becoming less and less effective. The clash of values--old and new--both valid in their own right--was producing unbearable strain on Joe, who was caught in the middle.

I listened at great length to Joe's mother as she vented her anger upon the school and the teachers, but did not respond to any of this. I kept bringing the conversation back to Joe's problem in school, and requested that the parents help generate possible solutions with me. The parents offered no ideas, so I suggested enlisting the help of our school counselor and social worker, and providing a constructive outlet for Joe's physical energies by enrolling him in a sports program sponsored by our city's recreation department. All these activities stress skill-building rather than competition.

All of my suggestions were rejected by the parents, and the conference closed without any plan of action agreed upon. However, Joe's father stayed to talk with me for about a half-hour after his wife left, and he did listen to my concerns. He expressed the thought that because Joe was very bright, he would succeed academically. I told him I did not share his optimism unless the anger was resolved, or at least brought under control. I thought Joe would not only not succeed academically, but might well hurt someone physically in the near future. The positive outcome of the conference was involving Joe's father in the matter of Joe's school life. He was thoughtfully concerned, and this was good.

It was apparent to me that Joe's survival in school depended on his ability to learn to deal with two separate value systems--that of his home and that of school. These value systems in some ways were poles apart and neither was going to change.

Joe naturally wanted to know what his parents and I talked about. He also seemed somewhat fearful, noticeably tense, and quite defensive when he asked. I gave him the gist of our conversation, but emphasized how pleased I was to meet his parents and learn something about the things they were interested in and valued. Joe didn't say anything, and left.

After this brief exchange, things began to improve. Joe began saying "hello" to me--hesitantly, at first. Realizing that I had an opening, I asked him to tell me about his dad's work as a lawyer and his mother's interest in music--just short sharings that helped me build a friendly relationship with Joe. My co-teacher and I enlisted peer support to encourage Joe's efforts in games at recess. We both encouraged him to talk about pro-basketball stars and games, which he followed closely and enjoyed talking about. In group discussions about problems the children encountered at recess--particularly fighting--we encouraged Joe to express his feelings about what went on (all negative, at first). But he was listened to, got involved in working out a group-designed plan for the games, and eventually got to be captain of a team.

Joe began to talk to me about his anger, his feeling that no one liked him, that he didn't even like himself, and how much he wanted to be a good athlete.

When he started to get angry at recess, I would intervene quickly and ask the children involved to talk about why they were upset--one at a time. Joe talked freely, loudly, and instead of becoming enraged, he began to cry--hard--all the while talking out his anger in a loud voice. With very angry children, I've noticed that when they switch from yelling, blaming others, defiance, and hitting, to loud talking and crying, the problem is on the way to being solved. It is especially critical at this point (as it generally is) for the teacher not to make value judgments, to blame, preach, or punish--but to listen empathically, keep the children talking to one another and expressing their feelings, reflect back the feelings, and then ask the children if they can think of better ways to handle the situation in the future.

As positive communication increased between Joe and his teachers, my co-teacher and I were able to discuss calmly and rationally with Joe the behaviors we expected of him and those which were unacceptable. We also taught him ways to meet the behavioral expectations--specific things he could do to relate positively to his peers and adults, to keep rules, to handle frustration and anger in acceptable ways. After working with this for a while, we then spelled out to Joe precisely what we would do if he acted in certain unacceptable ways: defied us, physically or verbally abused

another person, or threw or broke classroom materials. If he exhibited any of these very aggressive behaviors, he would be asked, quietly and calmly, to go to the office and sit quietly in a chair until he was ready to come back to class with a plan to work it out. No discussion would follow the direction; "Go to the office and come up with a plan to work the problem out." At this point, we knew that Joe was capable of controlling his behavior, and the responsibility for doing so was placed on him. He was also told that if he did not sit quietly in the office (without socializing, bothering office personnel, or chatting with the principal), we would call his mother and ask her to come to school and take him home. He could come back the next day, and we'd start right where we left off--in the chair in the office.

Joe made a number of trips to the office following this step in teaching him social responsibility. His mother was called twice to take him home. Joe did not choose to go home for the remaining three and one-half months of school, and rarely did he have to sit in the office. He still expressed anger and frustration, but he talked it out and, after taking a cooling-off period in the hallway, worked out a plan to follow rules and meet expectations.

As Joe grew calmer and less angry more of the time in the classroom and at recess, I began to ask him to set up and distribute science equipment, run errands, and pass out papers--indications that I believed he could accept responsibility doing useful and helpful things with me, that I trusted him, appreciated him, and viewed him as an important member of the group. Joe began to eat this up. He almost fell over himself trying to please me. His work improved slightly in math--he began to accept a little instruction, but not much. In science, he began trying to work with other children--a little more successfully than before. His behavior did improve. He no longer acted out his anger frequently. He muttered and grumped--he was never satisfied with the work he did--it was never good enough or worth much in his eyes. But his behavior was improving, and he seemed to feel much more accepted.

I did have another conference with Joe's father after things began to significantly improve, strictly for the purpose of sharing the good news with him. Parents need strokes, too. Joe's father talked a lot about his own work. He also talked about the changes in society, and the great

variety of life styles that made it increasingly difficult to maintain cultural patterns and traditions to which he and his wife were deeply committed. He said sincerely, "We are struggling." and I replied, "You're not alone." I then told him how much I had enjoyed talking with him, that I wanted to help in any way I could, but I did not want to invade the privacy of their home or family life in any way. Joe was their child--I cared about him and wanted him to succeed in school.

Joe was most anxious to know what his father and I talked about, appearing at the classroom door at 9:00 a.m., the next morning, right after the bell rang. I said, "I told your Dad all the nice things you're doing, and then your Dad told me about his work. I think your Dad is a beautiful person." Joe's face was radiant. He smiled and quietly said, "Thank you."

For the final three months of elementary school, Joe was happy, smiled a lot, kept the rules, talked to the point in discussions, made great progress in writing and reading, allowed me to teach him math, cooperated in science, made friends, encouraged and complimented other children at recess, and became more skillful in games himself. He stopped fighting and learned to talk all problems out fairly, calmly, and cooperatively with his teachers. It was hard to get Joe to go home after school. He wanted to stay and chat or help clean up.

In the closing month of school, Joe played a leading part in the school play. He played his part well, and received a lot of positive feedback from teachers, peers, and parents.

I wish I could tell you that all went well for Joe when he moved on to middle school. But it didn't. He returned to hostile aggressive behavior. When I learned of this, I asked myself, "Was it worth the effort and time you devoted to Joe in fifth grade?" The answer was yes. My co-teacher and I gave Joe our best effort, and perhaps he will adjust in time to all the newness and bigness of middle school, and take control of his behavior again. Elementary teachers have great advantages when it comes to helping a child with problems: small classes, far more time for one-to-one attention, and less pressure regarding academic performance. Also, the younger the child, the easier it is to solve problems. In the final analysis, the child must accept responsibility for his own behavior, and Joe's

behavior in school, at this stage in his life, is strictly his problem. He showed us he was capable of responsible behavior, and I hope he takes the initiative for getting it together again in middle school.

Chapter 5. The Passive-aggressive Child

Description of Behavior

When I became interested in understanding passive-aggressive behavior in children, I made a list of observable passive-aggressive (PA) behaviors and the kinds of things a PA child says. I found that the behaviors and verbal responses fell into two categories: generally annoying behaviors and behaviors related to school work. This division became important in terms of developing strategies. The general PA behaviors interfered with the learning of the other students and my teaching. Therefore, I dealt with these first. The PA behaviors related to school work, for the most part, affected the PA child only. Therefore, I addressed these after working on behaviors that adversely affected the rest of the class.

My original list of PA behaviors follows. It did not take more than 20 minutes to generate. What surprised me was its length. But this served to make me very aware of just how large a PA pro's bag of tricks is.

General PA Behaviors

1. Got out of seat frequently--to go to the bathroom, sharpen pencil, get a drink, talk with classmate, study bulletin board, look out the window.
2. Habitually late to class--upon entering classroom, slammed the door, stomped to seat, talked and laughed with classmates, feigned ignorance of interrupting.
3. Talked out and laughed frequently at inappropriate times.
4. Made annoying noises of many kinds (pencil tapping, foot tapping, desk-top banging, snickering, whistling, etc.).
5. Used equipment inappropriately--frequently broke it, claimed it was an accident ("I didn't mean to," "I couldn't help it").
6. Stuffed drinking fountain with paper wads--laughed when water then squirted all over the counter. Denied doing it, or if others had seen him do it, shrugged it off as "just a joke."
7. Stuffed the sink in boys' bathroom with paper, turned water on, and left. Someone else discovered the sink overflowing and water all over the floor. PA denied doing it.

8. Fell or played in mud at recess--came back to class with mud all over shoes, pants, hands; grinned and said, "I couldn't help it."

9. Chewed enormous amounts of gum with mouth open.

10. Brought football cards to school--played with and showed to friends at inappropriate times.

11. Made gadgets (with paper, tape, glue, etc.)--including paper "footballs," and played with these at inappropriate times.

12. When in library, wandered all over--feigned looking for a book but could not settle on one; refused assistance, talked, whispered, laughed.

13. If not watched, left the room without permission, left early for lunch and before the bell at the close of the day.

14. Regularly jumped up five minutes before recess and yelled, "It's recess time."

15. If I left the room for a few minutes, PA child fooled around, started trouble, bothered others who were trying to work. Walked quickly to his seat when I re-entered, grinning.

16. When asked to move his desk to a location of my choice, he began to move it inch-by-inch still seated in his chair.

17. When I was talking with or helping another student, PA child frequently attempted to join the discussion, give advice, ask questions, or tell a "Once-something-like-that-happened-to-me" story, often across the full length of the room.

18. Exhibited "drag-the-feet" syndrome at every change in the schedule--the last to start activities, comply with requests, get in line, come in from recess, etc. When spoken to, responded with, "Just a minute, I have to..."

19. When told to stop doing something, he did it one more time, two more times.

20. When spoken to about misbehavior, the PA

    a. feigned ignorance of what I was talking about--"I don't understand," "What do you mean?" "I was only..."

    b. changed the subject--asked a question or started to tell about something that had nothing to do with the situation at hand.

    c. asked emotionally, "Why do you pick on me all the time? So and so is doing it, too," or "Why don't you say something to...?"

    d. claimed someone else was doing it--he was an innocent victim.

21. Behaved as though he was entitled to my attention whenever he wanted it, regardless of what I was doing, and always demanded that I come to him.

22. Put "friends" down--cutting or otherwise inappropriate remarks accompanied by laughter: "I was just joking."

23. When sent on errands, returned after far too long a period of time with nothing accomplished and vague explanations of what happened.

PA Behaviors Related to School Work

1. When I introduced activities or began to give directions for specific tasks, the PA remarked loudly, "Why do we have to do that? It's boring," or loudly groaned, "I hate that!"
2. Spoke for the group without justification--"We hate that!" or "Nobody wants to do that!"
3. Delayed starting assignments until I asked him why he wasn't working. Responded, "I am, I was just..."
4. Constantly asked, "Why do I have to..?" "Couldn't I..?"
5. Rarely completed work without constant nagging.
6. When asked to show me his work his repertoire of responses included
   a. I didn't know I was supposed to do that.
   b. I didn't know how to do it.
   c. I lost it.
   d. I left it home.
   e. I handed it in.
   f. I didn't know it was due today.
   g. I did it, but I can't find it.
   h. Someone stole it.
   i. I didn't have a pencil.
7. During group discussions or classroom meetings:
   a. talked out of turn.
   b. talked about irrelevant topics.
   c. fooled with friends.
   d. constantly shifted position, bumped against others, complained that someone was bothering him.
   e. whispered and laughed with neighbors.
   f. laughed at what others said, and said things like, "How dumb!"
   g. played with gadgets--threw them up in the air.

In summary, then, the PA child hears only what he wants to hear, drags his feet at all transitions in the schedule, loses or misplaces belongings and then complains that he can't find them, volunteers to do things but manages to mess them up, and demands constant attention and service. He talks, laughs, and makes noises of all kinds at inappropriate times, is out of his seat frequently, and has a steady stream of excuses for misbehavior and failure to do his school work.

The individual behaviors of a PA child are not all that bothersome.

It is, rather, the fact that these behaviors occur one after another, all day long, day after day, steadily chipping away at a teacher's patience, good humor, and desire to get on with the teaching. After being in a classroom with a PA pro for a week or two, I found that after one, two, three incidents, I finally blew up! As the year progressed, his presence or the mention of his name aroused within me feelings of irritation, exasperation, and frustration. My frustration was compounded by a dilemma--was the behavior deliberate or accidental? It was hard to like a PA child for very long.

Causes of Behavior

Until two or three years ago, I was unaware of the nature and causes of passive-aggressive behavior. However, I was aware that certain children irritated me a good part of the time. It was impossible, even with great effort, to establish smooth working relationships with these children. Not liking my continual state of frustration and not understanding the problem, I resorted in desperation to assuming an authoritarian role. This made matters worse. When I showed my irritation in an attempt to gain compliance quickly, the PA behaviors were brought under control faster, but increased in frequency. Fortunately, I noticed that following the cessation of each PA behavior when I assumed the authoritarian role, the child not only seemed content, but often smiled. I soon realized that the PA child was receiving my attention (which was largely negative) all day long! I thought to myself, "Lady, you are being set up. What you are doing is exactly what the child wants. He wins, you lose. Get some help."

I talked about the behaviors of the PA child with my principal and several consultants. Shortly thereafter, my principal, having just returned from a conference, gave me a paper entitled "The Passive-Aggressive Child," which he had received from Nick Long (Note 5). Professor Long uses the term "passive-aggressive" in reference to the subtle ways children and adults deal with their anger in our middle-class culture. He says that children are told that when they are angry, they must not bite, scratch, push, punch, swear, yell, name-call, spit, hate, or wish someone would die. The PA child buys this message, but has not been taught constructive ways to deal with anger. He believes that anger is bad, then begins to

Step 6. Make a point of giving PA child some brief friendly attention every day. It is the friendly relationship that enables you to teach the PA child better ways to behave.

Step 7. Give child opportunity to talk about feelings. This can be done in discussions on what a friend is, teasing, fighting, competition, happiness, or whatever subject the group wants to talk about involving feelings. Help a PA child label his feelings--particularly anger, fear, rejection, and loneliness.

Step 8. Give PA child responsibilities. Engage him as your helper. Before he starts to do a job, ask him to tell you specifically what he is going to do and what behavioral expectations you can count on. I have found PA children to be disorganized, highly distractable, and easily led astray. They seem to have great difficulty concentrating and completing tasks. So, some organizational and sturctural assistance is helpful to them. When a PA child does successfully complete useful tasks that benefit himself and/or others, his sense of worth receives a boost.

Step 9. Reinforce all appropriate and thoughtful behaviors--briefly. Satisfy a PA child's need for attention by praising him for responsible behaviors.

Step 10. Meet the final battle--attitude toward authority figures and the institution of school--head on. It would seem that if steps 1 through 9 are successfully negotiated, the battle is won, but maybe not. In my experience thus far, one hurdle remains to be surmounted--the PA child's attitude toward authority figures and the institution of school itself. Though behavior may be responsible, and a reasonable and consistent effort to do the work evidenced, there may be anger or resentment just below the surface of compliance. With three boys who moved from HA to PA to compliance, I noticed this barely-hidden attitude: "I guess I have to do what I'm expected to, but I don't like it!" I discovered, quite by accident, a strategy for dealing with this point of crisis that proved effective. Have a private conference with the child. Let him know that you believe that he is ready to make the big choice that will determine whether or not he will be a successful person. Point out all the growth you have seen behaviorally, academically, and socially--as long a list of successes as you can think of. Put it in writing, and give the child a copy to keep. Let him know you believe he

can best get it done (sitting with friends, or working alone). I ask the questions, he makes the decisions.

Each time the child makes progress, completes an assignment, and/or concentrates well, reinforcement is provided for responsible behavior: "Nice job," "Thanks for your cooperation," "You used your time very effectively," "Good progress," "Interesting story"--whatever seems natural, appropriate, and sincere. This part of the process is critical. I am no longer reinforcing negative, destructive behaviors, but I use every opportunity, regardless of how small, to reinforce positive, responsible behaviors. Over a period of time, the PA child who is a pro will respond to positive reinforcement. I don't give up. The child did not become a PA overnight. I do not expect him to give it up in a day or two. Eventually, he responds to positive reinforcement, and he may even begin to actively seek it.

If resistance to doing work increases again (as it usually does--the path from not doing school work to doing the work consistently is not straight and narrow), I again let the child know I can't force him to learn. I let him know that when he's ready to work, my help is available, and then move on to my other students. I say no more, and do not get upset. Gradually, a PA child comes to the realization that school is a place to learn.

D. *Distracting, disruptive behaviors during discussion and classroom meetings.* In a private conference, I let the child know what I see him doing. Then I tell him that if he breaks a rule, I will just say his name, and that will be a signal to stop. If the behavior continues, he will be asked to take a time-out. He may return when he is willing to follow the rules.

Step 4. Have a conference with the child. Share your plan with the child. Tell him which behaviors are unacceptable, will no longer be tolderated, how they affect you, and what consequences will follow if they persist. I put the nonacceptable behaviors and their consequences in writing.

Step 5. Have an early parent conference. Let the parents know what PA behaviors you observe, and how you are going to handle them. Enlist their cooperation.

his contract in his room before being allowed to do his own thing or participate in family activities during the weekend. No scolding, no lectures, no discussion of why he didn't do his work--just "Up to your room. We'll call you for meals."

This puts the responsibility where it belongs--on the child. The family goes about its business without him. I aks the parents to tell the child to do the work to the best of his ability alone and that they should not correct any of it. When his work is finished, I ask the parents to look over the contract sheet and each item he has done and checked off--just to be sure that he has attempted all of it. The fact that the child wasted two weeks of worktime in school and didn't get his work done is *his* problem. When the work is done, parents should sign the cover sheet and have the child bring the contract to school on Monday morning, and tell him that if Monday morning comes and the work isn't completed, he will stay home, in his room, working until the contract is finished. This is not punishment. It is the natural consequence for failure to do his job--his schoolwork. The child is not being hurt, yelled at, hit, preached to, nagged, scolded, or in any way put down. Everyone is being pleasant, firm, and very tough. The child can't blame anyone but himself for his predicament. Usually, for a PA child, that one weekend of making up two weeks' work is enough, especially when he is left out of the other family members' fun; he can't watch TV, he gets very little attention, and he can't play with his friends. Thereafter, he is usually more willing to cooperate with me, and to take some direction. I have also found that at this point, I must be careful not to give the PA child undue attention or assistance. One can easily fall into the trap of doing the work for the child. I try to treat the PA child exactly the way I do the other students. My attitude conveys the message, "I have confidence in your ability to do your work and behave responsibly."

During the second contract, I help the child organize his work on a daily basis with low-pressure guidance and joint decision-making as to how much work needs to be completed each day in order to be on schedule. The PA child gets to make choices as to what part of the contract he wishes to work on and how he

C. *Delays starting work, rarely completes work without constant nagging.* I stopped nagging the PA child about his school work. I told him that teaching was my responsibility, and learning was his. I conceded pleasantly that I couldn't force him or anyone else to learn. If he chose to sit in school all day and not do any work, that was okay with me, just as long as he didn't bother other students who were working or interfere with my teaching. He could do anything he wanted to do, as long as he behaved. He was also told that if he did not work, I had a responsibility to inform his parents of this fact. This has turned out to be one of the most effective strategies I've ever used. A PA child learns fast--within a day-that he needs me more than I need him, and that his total freedom not to learn leaves him in an uncomfortable and vulnerable position.

When a contract period ends, I ask the PA child to show me his work. If he starts to make excuses, I cut them off and calmly but firmly say, "Get the work you have done together, and I'll get back to you in a few minutes." If a PA child produces a few papers--mostly incomplete--from the contract, I then give him all missing papers and assignments for a complete contract, staple them together with a note to parents stating what has to be done and providing a place for a parent's signature. During this process, I say nothing. Then I hand the child the packet of papers and note to parents, and courteously say that I expect a completed contract at 9:00 Monday morning. He usually asks, "What if I can't finish it?" "Then you will go home and stay there until it is finished."

Knowing that the above will most likely happen, I make a contract with parents beforehand, to discuss the school behavior of the child, and work out an acceptable plan or strategy with them for helping the child succeed. After school on the day the PA child goes home with his incomplete contract, I call the parents and let them know what has happened. Then I ask if they would be willing to do the following, emphasizing that it won't be easy, but will produce a highly desirable result--aid the child to assume responsibility for his school work. What I ask them to do is inform the child that I have called, and that he must complete

Making and implementing this initial plan took a lot of time and hard work. But it was interesting work with great benefits. Measured against the time I had previously spent responding to the provocative behavior of a PA child, I'm sure I came out ahead. The emotional rewards were tremendous. While making and implementing the plan, I was calm and in control. And the plan worked. By the end of the year, I knew how to work successfully with a PA child, to both his and my advantage, and thereafter was able to accomplish my goals with a PA child quickly without undue expenditure of time and energy. Like most things in the classroom, the first time through it is the most difficult.

There are two things I wish to expand upon before moving on to the PA behaviors related to doing school work. First, once I had my plan outlined, I followed it like a script with prompt action and little talk. This was necessary--a kind of shock treatment to make a PA child fully aware that he must change his mode of interaction with others or suffer the consequences. Second, the cooperation between myself and my principal on matters of discipline is a major factor in successfully helping a PA child learn to behave responsibly.

Step 3. Deal with PA behaviors related to school work.

A. *Constant complaints regarding classroom activities.* Legitimate complaints regarding school work I am willing to listen to and resolve. But a PA's complaints are chronic, and he generally is not receptive to working things out. Whatever alternative is presented, he rejects with, "No, that won't work." In other words, a PA child would complain all year, "Why do we have to do that?" or, "It's boring," "I hate it," if I did not eventually cease to entertain or respond to these comments. So now, after the pattern develops (it becomes easy to spot after a while) I just say, "You don't have to like what we do, but I'm tired of your complaints, and don't want to hear them any more. They don't help you, me, or your classmates." From then on, I ignore his negative comments. They gradually cease.

B. *Speaks for group without justification.* I remind PA child that he has the right to express his views and that others are perfectly capable of speaking for themselves.

Wandering around in library, usually bothering others	During library time, PA child was told that he had 10 minutes to find a book to read. Assistance offered. If he couldn't settle on a book at the end of 10 minutes, I would choose one for him, and then he would be expected to sit quietly for the remaining 20 minutes. There would be no discussion. Simply, "You choose, or I choose."
Leaving room without permission	Go over rules on leaving the room. If PA child breaks rules about working outside the room, he loses this privilege until he comes up with a plan to follow the rules, stating the behavioral expectations he's willing to commit himself to. If he leaves the room early before lunch or before school is over, he will be sent to the principal.
Regularly calling, "It's recess time," five minutes early	Ignore it. Classmates quickly catch on to this, and express considerable irritation with PA child for doing it.
Fooling around or causing trouble when I leave the room for a short period of time	Peer pressure often eliminates this behavior. If it persists, PA child is asked to sit at a "time-out" desk by my desk until I return. When he comes up with a plan to follow rules during my brief absences, he may do as the other students do.
Slow in complying with request to move his desk to a location of my choice	Set up two "time-out" desks by my desk. When I feel that PA child needs a "time-out," ask him to move himself and his work to one of the "time-out" desks. Let him know that when he's ready to work out a plan to follow work-time rules, I'll be ready to listen.
"Dragging-the-feet" syndrome at every change in schedule	Let PA child know what I see him doing. Ask him, "Is it helping you?" Thereafter, ignore his delaying tactics and start activities or leave the room with the rest of the class without him.
Responding irresponsibly when spoken to about misbehavior	Go over with PA child specific and frequent misbehaviors and specific responses of child when spoken to about these behaviors. Discuss how these responses are all ways of avoiding responsibility with respect to rules and behavioral expectations. Work out a mutually acceptable agreement for dealing with these situations in the future. When I see him break a rule or start to misbehave, I'll just say his name. This will be a signal for him to stop--no rationalizing, blaming others, or excuses. If PA child forgets about our agreement and resorts to old behavioral responses, I'll say, "Remember what we agreed upon in our talk?" pleasantly, and in a friendly manner.
Demanding my attention whenever he wants it	Discuss with PA child that other students also need my attention and work out a plan to wait his turn and work for longer periods of time by himself after receiving instruction and help.
Putting "friends" down	Review with PA child classroom discussions about "friends"--their characteristics, what one can expect from and is expected to give a friend, their importance in a person's life. Then ask PA child, "Are your hurtful remarks to your friends helping you?"

what I was after.

My plan is summarized in the following table. Each PA behavior I sought to eliminate is accompanied by the consequence for its continuation.

GENERAL PA BEHAVIORS

Unacceptable PA Behavior Ranked in Order of Annoyance	Consequences for Continuation
Talking out, laughing, making noise at inappropriate times	PA child would be simply requested to "stop it." If continued, he would be removed from group or classroom (sit or work in hall) until ready to behave appropriately. If behavior continued in spite of frequent "time-outs," PA would be sent to principal for misbehavior.
Butting in on others' conversations	I would just say his name, or "Is this your business?" or "Is this your problem?" while smiling.
Repeating "One More Time" moves	Explain to child what I see him doing (once), make it clear that this is a subtle form of defiance which is unacceptable. From that point on, after he was given a clear directive to stop it immediately and he did not, he would be sent to the principal for misbehavior.
Playing with football cards, paper footballs, and other gadgets at inappropriate times	PA child is asked to state the classroom rules with respect to these things. Then is told that if he breaks these rules, the cards, the footballs, the gadgets would be confiscated. Continued breaking of these rules would result in being sent to the principal for misbehavior.
Chewing gum in obnoxious manner	PA child is told that chewing gum with his mouth wide open was unpleasant to look at. Therefore, chew with mouth closed or suffer the consequences of putting gum in wastebasket.
Getting out of seat frequently	Ignored if child did not interfere with others. If child talked with classmates who were working, I would say pleasantly, "So-and-So is trying to concentrate."
Habitually being late to class	If PA child caused commotion or interrupted class activity, I would calmly and pleasantly ask him to go outside and enter the room properly. When PA did this, I would say (pleasantly), "Thank you. In the future, we would appreciate it if you would arrive on time." At a later time, I spoke with the child about lateness in the same way as described in the MA chapter.
Using equipment inappropriately	PA child told that equipment was to be used properly or not at all. If used improperly, then he would just have to watch others use it until he came up with a plan to do better.
Stuffing drinking fountain and bathroom sink with paper	PA child was told that inappropriate use of drinking fountain would result in loss of privileges to use it until he came up with a plan to use it properly. If bathroom facilities were abused, he would be sent to the principal for misbehavior.
Falling or playing in mud at recess	If PA child came into the room covered with mud, he would be sent home to change his clothes, or a parent would be requested to bring a change of clothes to school. If neither of these was possible, he would spend the remainder of the day sitting in the office. Mud belongs on the ground, not all over the classroom.

thing I had to do was to make a commitment to myself not to respond to a PA child's behavior with annoyance, irritation, or anger. I took a good look at the way I had been responding. The PA would do one, two, three annoying things in rapid succession from the moment school started. I could feel the irritation within me mounting. Following the fourth incident, I would respond immediately with exasperation. The behavior triggered my response. It was automatic. I know that at this point, I did not reflect upon my behavior. Pow!-- there it was. I lost my composure. I had to prevent this kind of response and, instead, think carefully about the way I would respond, no matter what the PA child did. I did this, first by retreating into myself for a few seconds, coming to grips with the feelings I was experiencing, getting them out of the way, and then coming up with a calm response.

As I learned to control the feelings aroused in me by PA behavior, control of the interactions passed from the child to me. This step was the most crucial one.

Step 2. Make a list of PA behaviors that irritate you, and rank them from most to least annoying. I knew that I had to eliminate the most bothersome PA behaviors in order to maintain an ongoing friendly relationship with a PA pro. This relationship was necessary in my plan, to not only help the PA child cease his annoying behaviors, but to help him learn to behave in ways that would gain him social acceptance. PA children are generally not accepted by their peers in fifth grade; their behavior is as annoying to the other children as it is to the teacher.

After ranking my list of general PA behaviors, I worked on eliminating the top five first. When this goal was accomplished, about 90% of the battle was won. My level of irritation and frustration was reduced so sharply as to practically eliminate my problem. Working on the remaining PA behaviors, numerous as they were, was relatively easy and pleasant. An unexpected bonus was also forthcoming: by the time the top five PA behaviors were stopped, many of the others also ceased with little or no conscious effort on my part. I think the PA child had gotten the message--games are out--and therefore stopped playing many of them of his own accord. How conscious or unconscious all of this was on the child's part, I didn't know. Nor did it matter; they stopped. That's

2. Psychological deafness--never seems to hear directions or anything he doesn't want to hear.
3. "I forgot" routine--child can remember many things, except something the teacher has asked.
4. Leaves things around--seems like every time you turn around, he has left something of his in the way--pencils, books, shoes, etc. Nagging is reinforced.
5. "Volunteer"--always volunteers, but disaster seems to result. Then child says, "But I was just trying to help."
6. Asks for help--but needs to sharpen pencil, find page, get a new paper, tie shoe, change the subject, etc.
7. Makes listening difficult--talks slowly when he knows you are in a hurry; talks softly.
8. Pseudo-friendship--in the process of being kind, he still gets his digs in, and causes hurt and frustration.
9. In the way--the PA child always seems to be in the way.

I am very grateful to Professor Long for enlightening me regarding both the causes and the general nature of PA behavior. Looking back, I realize that PA children in my classroom displayed a consistent pattern of small, frequent, irritating behaviors on a daily basis. I, in turn, displayed a consistent pattern of reactions to the behavior which always left me feeling uncomfortable, irritated with the child and with myself, and frustrated.

After reading about this behavior, the situation became clearer. Armed with my new understanding of how and why a child develops passive-aggressive behaviors as a way of interacting with others, and the goals of these behaviors, I had a "think" session with myself. I asked myself, "Is what you are doing helping the situation?" "No." "Then stop doing it, and come up with a plan to do better."

Knowing that I had to change my behavior and develop a set of new strategies for dealing with PA behavior caused me apprehension initially. But I figured that I had nothing to lose. So I set about my task, developed a set of strategies, practiced them for a year, and found that they worked.

Ten-Step Plan

Step 1. Get hold of your feelings--think before responding. A major goal of a PA child is to cause the teacher to display anger. The first

believe that he is bad, acts bad (to reinforce his self-perception), and, finally, adults (parents and teachers) tell him he is bad, completing the cycle. The goal of the PA's behavior is not merely to obtain attention, but to cause others to display anger verbally and/or physically. When this happens, the PA child seems to experience some kind of momentary relief.

I don't have any authorities to quote on the causes of passive-aggressive behavior other than Professor Long (Note 5), but allow me to share a few hunches with you. From my experience, I have concluded that PA children do desire attention, some a great deal, and others less, but, having somehow failed to get positive attention, they settle for negative attention of the nagging variety. Personality type may be a factor in the amount and kind of attention sought. For example, PA children who are extroverts and desire much interaction with others seek attention all day long from somebody--teacher and/or peers. Introverted children seek much less attention. Nevertheless, they, too, elicit nagging, at least from the teacher. Again, based largely upon my experience, I believe that unresolved anger or great frustration lie behind the kind of attention that PA children elicit and respond to. The PA extrovert makes his presence known continually, as this seems to be the way in which he lets the world know about his inner state, while the PA introvert tends to withdraw. Of the two case studies presented in this chapter, Steve is fairly representative of the extrovert, and Janet of the introvert. However, please do not conlude that sex is a determining factor, for I have had two PA boys who, measured by an extrovert-introvert scale, were introverts. With Steve, Janet, and the two boys, there was clear evidence that the underlying cause of their behavior in school was anger; the anger quickly surfaced with the extroverted personality, but was a long, often very long, time surfacing with the introverted personality. Somehow, the inner state of a PA child, whether extrovert or introvert, is indicative of a low self-esteem within the school situation, a give-up attitude on making it academically and/or socially, in the sense that they see their "successful" peers making it.

Long (Note 5) describes the ways a PA child gets to a teacher as follows:

1. Psychological blindness--tries to help by getting something, but never seems to be able to find it.

is and can continue to be a successful person. Then let him know that continued success depends on his deciding whether teachers, principals, and reasonable rules are his friends or his enemies. Point out that you suspect he looks upon teachers, principals, and reasonable rules as his enemies--because he resists and attempts to manipulate them. (I said to one PA, "You do what is expected, but you often give me dirty looks.") He will probably deny it, but you have given him something important to think about. Tell him that you care about him and want him to succeed. Ask him the following questions:

1. What happens to children who fight teachers and principals and break rules? Three times I've gotten the identical instantaneous response: "They fail." I knew then that I had hit the mark, and that the PA child knew that I knew. Follow this with something like, "Right. Some children fail not because they don't have the brains to succeed, but because they carry on their own private little war with the teachers and against the rules."

2. "Who loses in these private little wars?"
   "The kids."
   "Right again. If a child carries on this private war in middle school, he gets farther and farther behind in his work."

3. "What happens to a child like this when he reaches high school?"
   "I don't know."
   "By high school, such a child is so behind in his work that he starts skipping classes or staying home, and eventually drops out of school. He is, by then, a big failure."

4. "Who does a child like this hang around with if he drops out of school?"
   "Other drop-outs or 'burnouts'."
   "Right again."

5. "What do you think the drop-outs or 'burnouts' do all day and how do they feel?"
   "I don't know. I guess they get a job or watch TV."
   "A high school drop-out with no skills and no one to say, 'He's responsible and reliable' has a hard time getting a job. Children who skip classes most of the time or drop-out of school feel pretty badly most of the time, and often they get into trouble with the law. They have to do something interesting or exciting with their time."

Lay it out for the child, calmly, courteously, and in a caring manner. The results I've had with this discussion have been remarkable. The resistance and just-under-the-surface seething that I had sensed disappeared overnight. The PA child did his work with less prompting from me, and he began asking for help voluntarily and more patiently, his concentration was better. The change in attitude toward me,

work, and behavioral expectations was subtle but definite--he seemed fairly comfortable with all three. I sensed that I was no longer perceived as the enemy, even though I was demanding and tough.

A PA child who is a pro does not give up PA behaviors quickly or even willingly. The road to more positive sustained behaviors is somewhat inconsistent, involving a few steps forward and then a few back. Great patience and effort are required of the teacher. But PA behavior, unchecked and reinforced through elicited irritated or angry responses, leads to certain failure in school, I believe. The earlier this kind of behavior is recognized and attended to, the greater the chances of success.

Steve

Steve was in my class for fourth and fifth grade. During his early years in elementary school, he exhibited both hostile-aggressive and passive-aggressive behaviors. Steve was a pro at the latter. During his fourth-grade year, I worked on eliminating his hostile-aggressive behavior using the strategies outlined in the previous chapter. His reading skills were two to three years below grade level; however, intensive work, both in school and with a private tutor outside, raised it to a third-grade level by the end of his fourth-grade year. Since he wanted to be a good reader, he willingly accepted help from his tutor. As he became a more involved and responsible member of his fourth-grade class, his concentration and desire to improve skills in all academic areas increased.

As a fifth grader, Steve got off to a good start. He was a responsible patrol captain, and a fairly willing helper in the classroom. He evidenced greater social skills than he had the year before, and became friendly with most of the boys in the class. Steve was a fine athlete, very outgoing and fun-loving. He was also egocentric, evidencing a strong "me-and-my-interests-first" attitude. His commitment to "friends" was limited. If things didn't go his way with his neighboring peers, he became a pest, tease, name-caller, tattletale, noisemaker, joke-teller--anything to keep them attending to or serving him. He never sat in one group for any length of time, but usually, after a day, found another

classmate or group who was willing to have him sit with them. His sense of fun and fondness for minor mischief were his most attractive social characteristics within the peer group. Also, he loved to talk--constantly.

Steve had three different laughs. The first was merry, the appropriate laugh of a fun-loving child. The second was cruel, often accompanied by hurtful remarks and the inevitable, "I was just joking." The third laugh was leering and mocking. This laugh nobody liked--neither me nor the kids--and it was one of his favorite PA behaviors, particularly with teachers.

I noticed during the first month of fifth grade that Steve's handwriting had improved remarkably, attributable, I believe, to maturation. Privately, and especially within the group, I recognized and praised Steve's work in handwriting. On a sight vocabulary test, a fairly good indicator of approximate reading level, Steve scored at grade level 5.2. I suspected that he was reading and comprehending at about 4.0 - 4.5 grade level. This provided another avenue for praise, recognition, and encouragement. Things were going pretty well.

There were several problem areas that became evident, however. Steve had difficulty sticking with academic tasks without constant teacher supervision. He also exhibited every PA behavior listed earlier in this chapter.

Several examples will follow, illustrating how Steve behaved as a PA pro, and how I handled it. Almost all the boys in my class had a collection of football cards, and they were allowed to bring them to school. Together, we set up rules that football cards may be shared and/or traded before attendance morning and afternoon, at recess and lunch, and during free time. The boys also made paper footballs (little triangular wedges of paper held together with tape), with which they played a game. The rules governing the making and use of the paper footballs were the same as those for the cards. Steve complied with the rules for the cards (after being told that they would be confiscated if played with during "work" time), but not for the paper footballs. His cards were dear to him, and he spent his allowance purchasing them. Paper footballs could easily be replaced. Following attendance, I would say to the boys, "Time to put the cards and footballs away." Steve ignored this twice, and was given

a warning--defiance, even over minor issues, would not be tolerated.

The next time I said to the group, "Cards and footballs away," Steve looked at me (eye contact was made), shrugged, and shot the paper football across the desk to his neighbor one more time, talking and laughing at the same time. I took him to the principal (amidst great protesting--"What did I do? I was getting my work out! You are mean--you don't listen to me! Can't I have one more chance? Please, I won't do it again. I didn't hear you!"). All the way down three flights of stairs this continued. I said nothing, then told the principal what had happened and that Steve had been forewarned as to the nature of the consequences of his actions. The principal listened to him, then said, "When your teacher tells you to put the paper football away, put it away immediately."

Several days passed. Again, I said, "Footballs away, time to begin." Steve did not look at me, but said (to the air and loud enough for me to hear clearly), "Just a minute, one more shot," and he flicked the paper football across the desk at his friend. Then he stole a sideward glance at me, a little grin on his face. I said, "Let's go, Steve," and moved toward the door. He jumped out of his seat, complaining loudly and angrily that he hadn't done anything--he'd just returned the football to his friend. Why didn't I take the girls to the office for playing with their troll dolls after I said, 'Put them away'? "You are unfair--you pick on me all the time, and I haven't done anything!" By now, he was talking very loudly, he was a little misty-eyed, his chin was thrust out, and he stood before me, hands on his hips. I didn't say anything and continued toward the door. I opened the door and waited in silence without looking at him. He followed and called his mother from the principal's office. Steve did not want to be sent home, and thereafter put the paper football away when told to do so.

You may think that these incidents were too trivial for such severe consequences, but with a PA child, a real pro, I have found that subtle defiance in a thousand forms, delaying, dragging one's feet, and having the last word ("One more time--two more times," "Just a minute," "I am, I just have to...," "Just one more chance...") becomes the favorite, most consistent, and most repeatedly played game. Once these games get going and are allowed to continue, they rapidly escalate. Acting quickly and

firmly on subtle forms of defiance with the PA child has proved effective for me. All sorts of games stop, or nearly stop, when the child learns that I won't play. He learns that there are no lectures, scolding, arguing; no buying into his rationalizations or protests of unfair treatment; no listening to his pleas for "just one more chance." Talk from both teacher and principal is short, friendly, and strictly to the point: "This is what we expect. Meet the standard, or suffer the consequences."

Another incident took place about a week after the second trip to the principal for shooting the paper football "one more time." Steve was the last to arrive at our story hour in the library. Our storyteller, surrounded by the children and me, had begun. Steve stepped over several children, and seated himself in the middle of the group, facing the storyteller. Within 60 seconds, Steve was tossing a little plastic football (no bigger than a small plum) from hand to hand. This was one of Steve's "get-the-action-going" games. If he had not been stopped, he would have soon tossed the little football to one of the other boys, starting one of his psychological games which had frequently destroyed group activity, gained him lots of attention, and was successful in getting the teacher to blow up.

I reached over, touched his arm gently, and, when we established eye contact, indicated with a simple motion that the football was to be put in his pocket. I did not speak or show any annoyance. He turned away, and a few minutes later, tossed the football about two feet in the air and caught it again. Without speaking, I slowly and carefully stood up, took Steve gently by the arm, and led him out into the hall quietly, slowly closing the door behind me. If he had protested in any way, he would have made his third trip to the principal's office and gone home. But he came right along with me without saying a word and without the slightest trace of resistance. When I finally looked into his face, I knew he was frightened. He still did not speak, but his eyes never left mine. I spoke quietly and slowly. "Steve, I indicated inside that you were to put the football in your pocket." "Yes," he replied in a whisper. "Do you think you can do that now?" "Oh, yes!" he said in a rush. I think he had been holding his breath, and the football was swiftly returned to the pocket. "Do you think you can listen to the rest of the

story, behaving appropriately?" "Oh, yes!" again.

We went back into the library. Steve was thoroughly attentive for the remaining 20 minutes, and his behavior for the rest of the day was beyond reproach. I give credit to a PA when the time interval between incidents of misbehavior increases. He is making progress.

Another kind of incident happened repeatedly. Early in the fifth-grade year, Steve attempted to direct attention to himself during classroom meetings in all the ways described earlier in this chapter. When he broke a rule, he was asked to state it. When he whispered and laughed with his neighbors, he was kindly asked if he would like to share what he was talking about with the group. He always said no, and was usually embarrassed. If--after simply saying his name, issuing a simple corrective, having him state the rules when he broke them, or asking him to share his thoughts with the group--he continued to misbehave, I asked him to take a time-out at his desk until he was ready to behave appropriately in our meetings. It took a while, quite a few time-outs, but he learned after three months to behave responsibly in the classroom meetings and group discussions. I believe that he learned that he couldn't get the attention he craved by misbehaving when I didn't become upset or angry. He hated to be removed from the action, and he found that the only way he could participate in the group was by behaving.

Here is another little stunt he pulled one day. It was a wing-dinger, and I could hardly refrain from laughing. It was math time--10:00 a.m. Steve grumbled loudly, "I don't want to do math," made faces, opened and closed his desk, shuffled around in his seat. His neighbor, who was anxious to get to work, told Steve to move away. Steve grudgingly moved his desk a few inches, and within seconds was being a pest again. An argument started, and I instructed Steve to move his desk to a spot of my choice for the math period. I reminded him that the rest of us had work to do, and I expected him to behave. I didn't tell him to do his math, as he had already spent one weekend at home completing a contract, and he knew that getting his work done was his responsibility. No nagging from me. Pretty soon, I was involved at my desk with several students. Suddenly, I looked up to survey the room when an unusual noise caught my attention. There was Steve, on his hands and knees, under his desk (which he had moved into an open area in the room), working away

at the bolts that hold it together with a wrench. He had captured the full attention of a group of boys, each of whom was totally absorbed in watching Steve take the desk apart. Clink, clank, grunts, and then a running commentary from Steve on what he was doing. Steve began to laugh, and lo and behold, he had everybody in the class watching him. Two or three students farthest from Steve began to leave their seats to get a closer look at what Steve was up to. All math work had ceased.

I stood up slowly, and addressed the class in a calm, quiet voice. I also spoke slowly, "You have been concentrating beautifully--please continue until it is time for music." Everyone returned to his/her seat. Then I approached Steve, and said, "Where did you get the wrench?" "From the janitor," he replied, looking up as he answered, and then resumed his work. "Why are you taking your desk apart?" "I'm highering it. It's too low for me." "This is not an appropriate time to do that" (said in the same tone and manner I would say, "Have a nice day"). I continued quietly and slowly, "Move you desk back where I told you to put it and get your math out." "But I can't! Can't you see that the desk will fall apart if I move it?" "Move it--now" (very softly, and very calmly). "But if it falls apart, how can I do my work? I won't have a desk!" "Then you can work on the floor." Then I just waited--patiently, with no change of expression, and absolutely no display of annoyance. I was thinking hard about my own behavior, my plan, saying to myself, "This is not my problem."

Steve waited (it was utterly quiet in the room) and, after maintaining eye contact with me for a second or two, he moved his desk back where it belonged, grumbling. When the desk was in place, I said pleasantly, "May I see your math?" He started to protest, but checked it quickly, and produced his math book and card. I then said, "Good. Now you are ready to work," and immediately returned my attention to the other students. I do not know if Steve completed any math during the time remaining before music. He did not request help, and I didn't nag him about his work. I checked daily or sometimes every other day on progress he had made on his contract. If he got behind, I suggested the work he could do for homework to get back on schedule. An accounting was due every two weeks, and if he hadn't met the standard, his parents and I employed the "weekend plan."

Steve never again made one of his grandstand plays. He did gain the whole class's attention briefly when he "highered" his desk, but failed to achieve his goals of causing me to display anger and destroying the math period. Ending this episode took approximately a minute and a half. I felt good about the way I handled it, because I thought before I did anything, and I maintained control over the situation and the class as a whole. Nobody was upset--except Steve.

During the process of eliminating Steve's PA behaviors, I would occasionally ask him directly if he wanted some attention. I remember practicing and taping some songs we were preparing for our visit to a Senior Citizen's Day Care Center. The class was standing in three fairly compact rows. Steve was fooling around, talking and laughing with another boy on the edge of the second row. He was initiating one of his "get-the-action-going" moves, and I knew that the boys' section would deteriorate completely if Steve continued. Many of the boys were self-conscious about singing, and with Steve making jokes and snickering, the ripple effect had begun. I stopped the tape and said kindly, even sweetly, "Steve, would you like all of us to give you a little attention?" "No!" he snapped. I had discovered, to my surprise, sometime earlier that Steve did not like this kind of attention at all. After snapping, "No!" he would put on a mad face, look down, and cease abruptly all fooling around. He shaped up and behaved for the rest of the practice.

In November of Steve's fifth-grade year, I sent a letter to his parents describing Steve's academic progress and social growth (all the positive things first), as well as the problem areas I saw. I requested a conference (the second) with them, because I knew that Steve was at a critical point as to whether or not he would succeed in school in the long run. Even though he complied with rules and made a decent effort to do his school work, he seemed to be walking a tightrope. Underneath his outwardly acceptable behavior, I sensed his resistance, possibly a considerable amount of anger directed primarily at me. I explained that the purpose of the conference would be to discuss strategies for school and home that I believed would provide Steve with the optimal chance to succeed in school. The critical problem, as I saw it, was Steve's perception of authority figures. Before Steve's parents came in, a significant turning point in Steve's school life occurred.

He was sitting next to my desk. Two days earlier, I had moved his desk to this spot because he was constantly socializing with his friends. It was silent reading time. Steve did not have a book out, and I asked him if he had one. He replied, "Yes," in a disgruntled manner, opened his desk impatiently, and slammed the book on the desk top. Then he muttered, "I don't want to read." Sensing that a disruption was imminent, I said, "Steve, let's go out in the hall and talk." He quietly followed.

We sat at the hall table together. I felt relaxed and friendly toward Steve. I opened the conversation by quietly and calmly telling him that I thought he was ready to make the big choice that would determine whether or not he would be a successful person in the long run. I then pointed out how well he was doing in all academic areas; he was at grade-level in reading, writing, math, and science; he had outstanding ability and participation in physical education, sports, and art; he participated well and made excellent contributions in classroom meetings. I also mentioned that he had made many friends who liked and respected him. He was succeeding, and could continue to succeed in school.

Then I said, "Steve, this is the year to decide whether teachers, principals, and reasonable rules are your friends or your enemies." He was right with me. "I see you behaving as though I am your enemy--someone to resist and manipulate, if possible. When I ask you to start your work, you often give me dirty looks or look mad." I told him that I cared greatly about him, that I wanted him to succeed. That is why I saw to it that he worked, followed rules, and behaved responsibly. I then said, "Steve, what happens to kids who fight teachers and principals and break rules."

"They fail," he immediately responded.

"That is correct. Many kids fail in school, not because they don't have the brains to succeed, but because they carry on their own private war with teachers. Who gets hurt in these wars?"

"The kids."

"Right again. The teachers go right on teaching, the kid gets into trouble. In the meantime, he doesn't get his work done. If he continues resisting his teachers in middle school he falls farther and farther behind in his studies. By high school, such a kid is so far behind that he starts skipping classes or staying home, and eventually, drops out of school. He is, by then, a big failure. Kids who drop out of high school

or skip most of their classes hang around with other failures--and this group often gets into trouble with the law."

Steve had been listening very intently, and at this point, his eyes widened, he jumped up, and said, "But I've never been in trouble with the law!" His voice and eyes revealed alarm, possibly fear.

"I know that. But you're only ten. I just want you to be aware of what often happens to kids who look upon teachers, principals, and school as their enemies."

Then I said, "Steve, I am not going to attempt to force you to study or learn anything. Learning is your responsibility, teaching is mine. When you do work in school, you do it for yourself, not for me, the principal, or your parents. If you choose not to work, I won't be upset, or angry or hurt--just as long as you don't bother the other children who are working. But you will obey the rules, because the other children have the right to learn, and I have the right to teach. Think about what I've said, and thanks for listening."

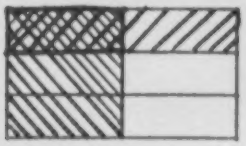
Following our private discussion on private little wars with teachers and principals, Steve showed a subtle but very definite change in his attitude toward me. I sensed that he no longer perceived me as the enemy. Also, a week later at recess, Steve and a group of boys were playing football. One of the boys began criticizing a teammate for throwing a pass that was intercepted. He was saying loudly, "You didn't even try. That was a terrible pass! You want the other guys to win!" I called the complaining player out of the game to remind him of our rule that prohibits put-downs. Steve came running by, stopped, and added in the nicest way, "You gotta let people make mistakes, Jake. He did his best. Come on, let's play." The two children ran back into the game. It was a lovely moment. Steve, one of the all-time put-downers as a beginning fourth-grader, was showing empathy for a teammate less skillful than himself,willing to forgive and forget, and saying, "Let's get on with the game." That moment made me feel good.

Three weeks later, Steve was working hard, indicating a sincere desire to do his work. He required less supervision, was anxious not only to complete his contract, but to do the seven extra credits necessary to get a "super-exceeds expectations." Several times, he verbalized the way he felt about his work. "I want to get a blue-plus this time." He was able to work out of the room with a friend, state how much he intended to

accomplish, and fulfill his commitments. All of his work showed significant improvement. Steve was really moving! He began approaching me to ask questions and to check out his progress. At the same time, he began to make startling progress in competitive swimming, which I shared with the class, much to Steve's embarrassment and great pleasure. The children responded by giving Steve wonderfully supportive strokes.

And then a bit of magic occurred. Steve had started the fraction unit, beginning with the multiplication of fractions. The first page consisted of problems like the following:

$1/2 \times 2/3 = ____$



I showed Steve how to color in half of the rectangle. Then I had him turn the rectangle 90° and color in a third. I said, "Outline the overlapped area. That is the answer--one-sixth of the rectangle."

He did the page of problems, using his crayons, and suddenly came running to my desk. "Mrs. M., I think I know an easy way to multiply fractions," and lo and behold, on his own, he had discovered the algorithm for multiplication of fractions. "Right on, Steve!" I said, smiling. His eyes were shining, and he was so pleased with himself. He said, "This is fun--I really like fractions!" and dashed back to his seat to work on the next page. Success--there's nothing like it to turn a kid on.

Steve became an involved, responsive, and open child in classroom meetings. He made pertinent and relevant comments that were revealing as to how far he had come in social and emotional growth and self-confidence. He was able to say things about the way things used to be with him and how they were now that some of the other kids would be unable to say because of fear of embarrassment or self-disclosure that would be threatening. I've pondered over this, and experienced a sense of amazement. Steve seemed to arrive at a comfortable feeling about himself which allowed an unusual degree of self-disclosure which was not personally threatening.

Steve came a long way. I still had to supervise him pretty closely, remind him now and then about a rule, and nudge him along with his school

work. But significant changes occurred over two years, applying strategies outlined in this chapter and the one preceding it.

1. He ceased hostile-aggressive behavior in and out of school. (His first year in middle school, he came to visit me. His opening statement was, "I don't fight any more.")
2. He exhibited passive-aggressive behaviors much less frequently. Just saying his name was eventually enough to cause him to cease PA behavior. He was often sufficiently aware of what he was doing so that he stopped an inappropriate behavior on his own.
3. He was functioning well in school--academically and socially.
4. While he may never become a scholar, he worked at his studies with confidence, much greater and longer concentration, and with occasional bursts of enthusiasm.
5. He responded to praise for positive appropriate behaviors and repeated these behaviors rather consistently.
6. He responded positively to praise for academic achievement and progress, and verbally stated that he wanted to do good work.
7. He participated actively in classroom meetings (general discussions and problem-solving sessions), and often said things like, "Oh, good" when I announced we were going to have a meeting, or, "That was fun" afterwards.
8. His ability to think logically for a sustained period of time significantly improved.
9. His attitude toward me became positive and friendly. He got very upset if I was not in school (as reported by substitutes), and even though I was very demanding of him regarding his behavior and his studies, he evidenced little resentment.
10. His parents told me he was a different child at home--much happier, more responsible, more willing to cooperate and pull his own weight.
11. He maintained friendships and evidenced empathy.
12. He volunteered to be of service in the room, even with unpleasant jobs, and performed consistently and well.

Janet

It would have been easy to overlook Janet all year long, as she sat as far as possible from me, demanded nothing of me, and spent most of the time in the classroom with her back to me, her desk facing the wall. She kept her face down, shielded by her long blond hair. Rarely did she do anything to draw attention to herself within the group.

Early in the year, Janet was always reading a book, even on her way to recess. As it was not safe to walk down three flights of stairs while reading, I requested that she leave the book in the room. Often she took it with her after agreeing not to read going down the stairs. Janet also appeared not to hear instructions, directions, or my comments regarding all transitions in the schedule pertinent to academic work (math, writing, classroom meetings, science, social studies) or special areas (gym, music, art). The whole class would begin an activity or line up to go out of the room--except Janet. She continued to read, apparently oblivious to everything and everyone around her. I would say, "Janet"--no response. "Janet"--no response. "Janet!" After the third "Janet," she might look at me, but say nothing, or say, "What?" in a soft voice. When I told her what we were starting to do, she would get out her materials, or bounce up and get in line--grinning. She had only one friend, Susie, and this appeared to be by choice. With the rest of her classmates, Janet maintained a distance and a straight-faced, reserved, or cool manner.

One day I had instructed the class to begin math work. Janet had her head in a book and I was going through my "Janet one, Janet two, Janet three" routine, when one of the boys said in an off-hand, quiet way, "That's okay, Mrs. M., she did that all last year, too." I really heard that comment, thinking to myself, "Thank you, Bob." He made me aware of what I had been doing since school opened. Janet looked up and smiled following Bob's comment. I resolved that I would not give Janet further attention for failure to hear directions or follow the schedule. Thereafter, whenever we left the room for an activity, I ignored her. Apparently, she was quite aware that we were leaving the room, and joined us in a minute or two.

As a result of Bob's comment, I observed carefully what Janet did

during the school day--only reading, drawing, making little gadgets or paper holders for scissors, pencils, and the like, and quiet socializing with Susie. Even though she got out her materials for math, writing, science, or whatever, she did nothing with them. The book popped out of her desk all day long, and on she read. So I started putting pressure on Janet regarding school work. At the beginning of every in-class activity, I would go to Janet's desk, ask her to produce the proper materials, ask how much she thought she could accomplish (she responded quickly, softly, reasonably), and move on. After moving around the classroom for five or 10 minutes, I would return to Janet. She had done no work, and was reading again.

When asked what she was supposed to be doing, she would say nothing, close the book, and appear to start her work again. This little routine was played out over and over. At the end of a week, Janet might have written one sentence, done one page of cursive writing, and two math problems. During science, Susie, Janet's partner, would be doing the experiment and filling in Janet's data book while Janet read. When I asked Janet why she wasn't doing the experiment and filling in her own notebook, she would respond, "I don't know." When pressed further, she would say, "I don't understand what we are supposed to do." I checked Janet's cumulative record file and found the following comment from Janet's fourth-grade teacher: "Janet resists all school work except reading."

I had my first private talk with Janet and asked her why she didn't do her school work. Her soft response, "I don't know," contained a strong element of helplessness. For the most part, she said nothing--just looked at me with big sad eyes. Trying to have a discussion with Janet was difficult. I was talking and asking questions, but there was virtually no response. When asked to show me her work (which hadn't been done), she'd offer a variety of excuses in a voice so soft I often had to ask her to repeat what she said. The excuses included, "I didn't know how to do it," "I lost it," "I left it home," "I forgot," "I don't know."

I was perplexed. Janet was not a discipline problem, but for some reason she refused to do school work. The reading test revealed that Janet possessed the reading skills of an eleventh-or twelfth-grader.

She was the most competent elementary school reader I had ever known. The lack of responsiveness was a barrier to my understanding.

In her social interactions, I observed that Janet played helpless and Susie did everything for her except blow her nose. Janet played the helpless little child to Susie's mother. Laura, who also liked Susie and wanted to be her friend, moved her desk into Susie and Janet's corner. Janet began coming to me with complaints about Laura. During the first problem-solving session with the three girls, it became clear that Janet did not want to share Susie with anyone, and spent a good part of the day trying to convince Susie that Susie didn't like Laura. Janet exhibited a high resistance to honest exploration of the problem, and soon lapsed into silence.

There was much friction in Susie, Janet, and Laura's corner. Laura came to me one morning, almost in tears, over something Janet had said. I asked Laura to tell Janet what had upset her. Laura said, "Janet, you said I was stupid because I couldn't do these math problems." Janet said, in a perfectly audible, somewhat pompous voice, "No, I didn't say that. I just said that she didn't think. Anyone with a reasonable amount of intelligence should be able to figure those problems out." These words were well chosen, and had the effect of a shotgun blast. I said, "Janet, in other words, you were telling Laura that she is stupid." Janet just continued to calmly look me in the eye, but said nothing.

Shortly thereafter, I instructed Janet to complete a math assignment for homework. I told her I expected to see a completed paper at 9:00 a.m. the next morning. "Yes," she replied, softly. I asked Janet the next morning for the completed paper. Silence. "Did you do it?" "No," very softly. "Okay, Janet, move your desk and chair right up here by my desk, get that paper out, and finish it before you do anything else." "Suppose I do it within the next 20 minutes at my desk where it is" (perfectly audible voice). "No, move your desk, now." She moved her desk and chair right by me, got paper out, put her head down, and started weeping softly. Occasionally, she glanced at Susie, who was back in the corner looking very anxious. At this moment, a telephone message was delivered to me which read, "Please call Janet's mother." I read it to myself and put it in my purse. The

weeping grew louder, and Janet now had her head on the desk. I took Janet across the hall to an empty room, and told her to sit down.

"Janet, the time has come for you to stop playing all your little games and start working. You can also stop the weeping, because it doesn't fool me one bit, and it won't arouse the slightest sympathy." "Okay," she said, and the weeping stopped instantly. "You have gotten away with this helpless routine for five years in school, but no longer. You are a bright girl, you can do all the school work assigned to you plus more, and that is exactly what I'm going to expect you to do. Do you understand?" "Yes," she replied clearly, looking me right in the eye. (Note: At this point, I could read no emotion of any kind in Janet's face. However, I feel certain that I did not intimidate her even slightly. She was holding her own with courtesy and, I think, determination.)

Before I had a chance to call Mrs. A., she appeared in my classroom. She explained that she wanted to talk with me sometime during the day, but understood that I was busy at the moment. I talked with her immediately in the empty room. She told me that Janet was afraid to come to school that morning because she hadn't finished her math paper and I would be furious with her. Janet had been crying at home, but Mrs. A. had finally convinced her to go to school.

I told Mrs. A. what had transpired between Janet and me about an hour before, and she seemed relieved and pleased. I then set up a conference between Mr. and Mrs. A. and myself. At the conference, I told the parents what I observed:

1. Janet passively refused to do all school work except reading.
2. When she spoke (which was rarely), her voice was so soft it could hardly be heard. Often, I had to ask her to repeat what she had said.
3. She hears only what she wants to hear.
4. She pretends she doesn't know what she is supposed to do.
5. She plays baby or helpless with her friend Susie, and elicits constant service.
6. She plays helpless with me, and blocks productive interaction by maintaining silence.

I expressed great concern, and admitted that I was at a loss as to how to get this child to respond. The parents told me that Janet

was very articulate at home, but if she did not get her way, she resorted to the same passive tactics I had observed in school. We agreed that Janet should start seeing our school counselor, and after these talks had gotten well under way, with Janet's permission the counselor also had several talks with Mrs. A, and one which included Mr. A. I told the parents that I was going to continue to put pressure on Janet regarding school work. They were completely in favor of this, as they wanted Janet to develop self-discipline and to do well in school, and were as baffled as I why she did no work.

With Janet right by my desk, and constant pressure from me, she finally completed a contract, electing to do the four extra credits for a blue or "exceeds expectations." Janet showed elation over her success, both with me and at home. I suggested she show her contract to the principal. He reinforced her efforts and accomplishment with sincere praise. Janet then assured me that she would continue to do her work if permitted to move her desk back with friend Susie. I agreed to this move.

Sometime later, Susie asked me if I would have a private talk with Janet and Laura and herself. I agreed, and at the meeting I asked Susie to state the problem. She was very upset and said that she just didn't know what to do. Janet was mad at her for playing with Laura at recess, had walked off by herself, refused to talk to her when she followed, and still refused to talk to her. I asked if it was possible for the three of them to play together at recess, and Susie said, "Janet doesn't like Laura, and refuses to play with her." When I asked Janet why she disliked Laura, she said, "I just don't like her." Later, Janet made the following comment: "I don't think it's proper to tell people why you don't like them, because it might hurt their feelings." I suggested that perhaps just knowing that someone doesn't like you and refuses to have anything to do with you hurts more than being told why. At least when you know why, there's a chance for working things out.

Then I asked Susie, "What other alternatives do you have when a friend walks off in a huff and refuses to talk to you?" Susie responded, "I don't know. I want to be Janet's friend, and it upsets me when she does this." I was about to speak when Janet said, brightly

and spontaneously, "I know!" I smiled and said, "Go ahead, Janet." "Don't pursue the friend who has gone off in a huff. Ignore her and go play with others. The friend will then say, 'My huff didn't work. I'd better go back and apologize.'" She smiled broadly. I was momentarily speechless and amused. "I think that is an excellent alternative, Janet. Thank you," and I returned her smile. "What do you think about that, Susie?" "Well, I don't know. I'm not sure I could do that." Susie was unconvinced, and still upset.

I was now convinced that Janet was not simply bright, but extremely intelligent. I was also certain that she was a pro at passive-aggressive behavior, but a first of her type in my experience. She played helpless, and demanded constant service from her friend. She displayed helplessness with me, and feigned almost total lack of understanding as to what was expected of her academically, was always "losing things" or "leaving them home," for the most part maintained silence whenever I attempted to converse with her, or answered my questions with a sad, soft, almost pathetic "I don't know," and she heard only what she wanted to hear. After successfully completing one contract and moving back with Susie, Janet again reverted to passively resisting doing school work. We were right back to square one. I again got the "I don't know" or silent treatment.

One morning, Janet had contracted herself to do one math assignment. At 10:30, I checked and found that she had done one problem. I took her downstairs to the reading lab (which is run by a full-time aide), sat her down, and said firmly, "When you have completed this paper, you may return to the room." Janet was back in the room in three minutes flat with a completed, totally correct math paper. This child was full of surprises. Math, she had been claiming, was totally beyond her--she understood nothing, and she hated it.

She continued to do little school work. One day, she had all day to write two short thank-you letters. I checked on her progress repeatedly. At the end of the day, when she still had not completed the second letter, I kept Janet after school until she completed the letter. Janet quickly completed the rough draft of the letter without errors.

The next morning, Janet was instructed to make a final draft of the letter. Two hours later, after continual prompting from me, she

had written only five words. I finally took Janet to the principal for a chat. I explained that Janet's plan to get her work done wasn't working, and suggested that we all talk it over. I suggested that perhaps she should stay at home, as there was no point in her coming to school if she refused to learn, or she could choose to go into a third- or fourth-grade class where the demands would be much less than in fifth grade. I expressed doubts whether it would be wise to send her to middle school next year totally unprepared to do the work that would be expected of her.

Janet remained silent, staring at the table. The principal asked her why she wouldn't do her school work. Silence. He rephrased his question, expressing concern for her welfare, and our mutual desire to help her develop her skills. Silence. He looked at me and raised his eyebrows. Then he said, "Janet, I want you to tell me why you refuse to do your work and cooperate with your teacher." A short silence followed and then in a wee, sad voice, Janet responded with, "I don't know." "In other words, Janet, you're saying, 'You figure it out, Mr. D., read my mind.' Tell me about the work you are supposed to do but refuse to do." Janet raised her head, looked Mr. D. right in the eye, and said with a deadpan expression and a clipped tone, "How do you expect me to remember the specific assignments I'm supposed to have done when I've just told you that I don't even know why I don't do them?" Mr. D., who rarely ever gets upset, was now visibly annoyed. He stood up quickly and said emphatically, "Janet, I have better things to do than listen to your evasive responses. When you think of a reasonable answer as to why you don't do your school work, come to me and we'll talk about it." Then he walked out of the room. I left Janet sitting in the office. She returned to the classroom several minutes later, and calmly took her seat.

I arranged a conference with Mr. D., Mr. and Mrs. A., our school counselor, and myself. Mr. D. suggested that we simply present the situation to Mr. and Mrs. A., and then exchange ideas as to how to proceed. I had a hunch as to why Janet refused to do school work but nothing of substance to back it up with, so I simply suggested a plan that I thought was worth trying:

Ground rules:

1. Janet will do all contract work for two weeks at empty desk by Mrs. M.'s desk.
2. Daily: 10% of regular two-week contract, plus 10% of advanced work (requested by Mr. A.) to be agreed upon by Janet and me, and written on daily contract form.
3. Janet will complete the above work in school, or take it home to complete.
4. If Janet takes required work home, Mrs. M. phones Mr. and Mrs. A. to advise them that work was not completed in class.
5. Janet understands that she can return to class when the work has been completed.
6. If Janet "forgets" to take required work home, she returns to school to get it, either the same day or the following morning.
7. No help to be given at home on assigned school work.
8. If Janet completes daily required work, she is free to read or do anything she wishes if contract time is left over.

What teacher will do:

1. At the end of two weeks, Janet and Mrs. M. will evaluate together how the new arrangement is working. They will evaluate the plan, and possibly renegotiate the agreement.
2. Send extra math work (not required) home, per Mr. A's request.
3. Give Janet an advanced reading contract to work on.

Mr. D., Mr. and Mrs. A., the school counselor, Janet, and I received copies of the agreement, and the plan was explained to Janet.

For the first week, all went well. Then Janet elected to do a final draft, a required assignment for the day, at home. The next morning at 9:00 a.m., I asked to see the completed final draft, and found she hadn't done it. We were on our way to assembly in our own school, and immediately afterwards would board a bus to go on a field trip. I reminded her that she had elected to do an assigned piece of work at home, and until it was completed, could not return to school. Janet called her mother from the office to let her know she was coming home.

I walked Janet (who was now weeping softly) to her locker, said pleasantly that I hoped to see her soon, and went on to the assembly. All of this was not easy for me to do, as she was so small and looked so forlorn.

Janet returned to school after lunch with a completed composition.

She expressed herself well in writing and had an excellent command of mechanics. What struck me in particular was her beautiful handwriting, which until now had usually been sloppy. She appeared to be very happy, and, for the first time, participated actively in a science discussion, indicating a superior understanding of the concepts involved. At the end of class, I thought, "After being sent home this morning, Janet had the best school day of the year. Not only did she fully participate, but she evidenced an involvement and a degree of animation that I have not seen before."

The same week, she completed her second contract. I complimented her and also gave her a "glad note," praising her for her effort. She expressed the thought that her work wasn't good enough--she should have worked to get a "blue-plus." I commented that she had made progress. The following week, Janet began to approach me to tell me how much she intended to do each day. I increased my interaction with her, saying pleasant things and smiling, and complimenting her when she finished assignments. Mr. A. had been helping her memorize the math facts, and she scored 100% on the "hard math facts" test. She asked me if she could skip some math assignments in her sequence, as they were too easy. I encouraged her to try the more difficult assignments. To my surprise, she scored 100% on several. When she completed daily work in school, I suggested that she take an occasional assignment home so she could get a blue-plus, her stated goal. She carefully checked out whether or not these suggested homework assignments were required, and I said, "Oh no! They are optional." She took them home, and completed some of them there.

One day, we saw a film about the Bill of Rights. Two lawyers argued their cases before a judge. At recess, following the film, Janet approached me and said, with conviction, "I've decided I want to be a lawyer." I asked her what she thought she would have to do to attain that goal. She replied, "Study hard and get good grades in school." "When do you think that hard study or production of your best work should begin?" I asked, smiling. She looked at me for a few seconds and said in a flat tone, "Oh, I don't know." I asked her if she could stay after school for a few minutes to continue our conversation privately, and she said yes.

I asked Janet to continue our conversation after school because of the flat tone of voice used when she said, "I don't know." Over a period of several months, Janet had made several spontaneous statements in that same flat tone, so different from her usual way of speaking that they caught and held my attention. After a while, I began to suspect that Janet's statements delivered in the flat tone were veiled statements of protest. I thought the time was right to test my hunch.

Before continuing, it is necessary to put several things in perspective. Janet's parents, highly educated, articulate, gracious, intellectual, and individualistic (a background which had certainly contributed to Janet's extraordinary competence and breadth in reading, and her ability to express herself with great sophistication and wide knowledge when she was so inclined), had elected a lifestyle that was perhaps more adult-centered than those of the parents of Janet's peers, and not in conformity with the majority of families with whose children Janet was interacting at school. Her parents, and all parents, are entitled to their own values and, in this age of mass media and other forms of pressured conformity, I admired them for sticking to them. However, it was my hunch that this somewhat different lifestyle was causing conflict for Janet within the peer social scene, and might explain her behavior in school. Janet's parents did not have a T.V., limited but did not prohibit the children having candy and other sweets--restrictions decided upon to foster the intellectual pursuits and the physical health of the children and the family. However, I think Janet perceived these restrictions and the emphasis on adult-centered conversation and pursuits in a negative way. Her perception, as we were to find out, was that her life was too controlled and too adult-centered, producing a conflict with what she believed were more carefree and less restricted lives of her peers. Janet was angry, though unconsciously so, and when she finally was able to verbalize the anger and identify the problem, she began to change her behavior.

When we were alone, I told her that I would like to test a hunch. She was agreeable, so I recalled for her some of the previous statements she had made in that flat tone, and asked her if she remembered them. She remembered each clearly. I then asked her how she was feeling when she made them, and without hesitation, she said, "Oh, I was

furious!" (This feeling did not come through--not even a hint--at the time she made those statements.) I said, "O.K., here's my hunch. I think there might be a connection between your 'furious' feelings and the fact that you fight so hard against doing your school work." Then I waited, but not for long. Janet looked at me, giggled, and then said, quite casually, "Yes, I don't do my school work because I know my parents want me to do well in school." In other words, Janet was dealing with her anger by withholding something she knew her parents valued. I asked Janet if she thought her resistance to doing school work was hurting her. She just shrugged her shoulders.

Mrs. A. stopped in to see me frequently, and when I shared what I had learned with her, she was totally surprised, concerned, and a little amused at Janet's ingenuity. My theory, which I shared with Mrs. A., was that her unusually intelligent child was rebelling passively against what she perceived (again, I caution the reader that this was the child's perception) as too much control and rigidity at home, and a family lifestyle that was somewhat apart from the mainstream (fewer sweets, no T.V.). Mrs. A's comment was, "I think the puzzle is being put together. Your theory explains some things, but not all of it. Janet's retreat into reading began in second grade, and I believe this happened because the work began to be repetitious and unchallenging." Mr. and Mrs. A. requested to meet with our school counselor.

Janet didn't change her tactics overnight. She still had to be prodded to do her work, and only occasionally did work at the level of her capabilities, but for the last few months of school, she was a much happier child. She decided to invest her energies into widening her circle of friends. She became pleasantly and happily involved with many of her classmates, even developing a friendship with Laura while retaining her special closeness to Susie; she followed the schedule voluntarily; smiled and laughed more; and talked to me about many things with a charming and infectious enthusiasm.

The next year, Janet got off to a rather slow start academically, but around the middle of her sixth-grade year, she began to work and achieve. One of her teachers told me that Janet occasionally did outstanding work, got along well with her classmates, and maintained her individuality and her independence. Janet is not yet performing con-

sistently at the level of which she is capable, but she is making significant progress.

In conclusion, I would like to share a few reflections for what they may be worth. Janet's resistance to doing school work was and is undoubtedly complex. It is highly probable that this very intelligent child found many school tasks boring and unchallenging and books more stimulating. During fifth grade, friends and being a part of a peer group become increasingly important to youngsters, and Janet's small rebellion might have been partially reflective of this desire for social acceptance and the emerging sense of independence common among 10 and 11 year olds.

Janet's family is very close. Warm loving relationships exist between the parents, and the parents and children. It is possible that Janet felt that her angry feelings regarding some aspects of her family's lifestyle were bad and, if voiced, would precipitate something catastrophic--such as loss of parental love. This is pure speculation on my part, of course. But after she did state the reason why she did not do her school work, she did become slightly pale and then very quiet. I asked her if she could talk to her parents about what she had just said, and she said, "Oh, no," appearing somewhat apprehensive. However, nothing catastrophic did happen, and shortly thereafter Janet began to actively participate in discussions, enter the kickball games at recess, interact happily and pleasantly with me and many of her classmates. An expansive, sparkling, fun-loving personality emerged. Janet had a marvelous sense of the ridiculous which was delightfully funny. Janet came alive in the classroom, and I believe the change occurred when she found out that it is all right for children to sometimes be angry with their parents.

Chapter 6. The Withdrawn Failure-Image Child

Description of Behavior

Children with a failure-image can be either hostile-aggressive or passive-aggressive. Somewhere along the line, each has said to himself, "I give up! I can't make it in school." The result of their acceptance of being a failure (in their own eyes) is active. Each in his individual way fights back through disruption or anti-social behavior. A second option for a failure-image child is to be truly passive--withdrawn. From the standpoint of healthy development, withdrawal is more serious misbehavior than HA or PA behavior for two reasons: it is indicative of a true giving-up, an unwillingness to fight any more; the behavior may go virtually unnoticed in the classroom, and therefore cannot be attended to.

In this chapter, the failure-image child that I will be talking about is not HA or PA, nor the slow learner, but the child who is intellectually capable of grade-level work, yet does not perform at the level of his capabilities, and has given up on himself and school, as evidenced through withdrawal.

The following behaviors of a withdrawn failure-image (WFI) child come from my observations and experience in the classroom:

1. *Avoids interaction with teacher;* rarely makes eye contact with teacher; may have negative attitude toward teachers; exhibits selective hearing with the teacher--hears only what he wants to hear. Maintains distance from teacher, and does not draw attention to himself.

2. *Has little interaction with peers* except for one or possibly two friends; may be the silent partner in a friendship; often works with a friend and gets friend to do his work for him.

3. *Lack of verbalization;* within the classroom the child is habitually silent. Conversation with peers is minimal, and is conducted in whispers, soft voice, and few words.

Responds with a brief "Yes" or "No" when spoken to by teacher; may frequently complain (to the teacher) of headaches, stomach-aches, or of feeling ill or tired while in school.

4. *Exhibits noticeable anxiety* with respect to school work (either when spoken to by teacher or voluntarily), which can amount almost to paralysis; gets frustrated over assignments and may quickly say, "I can't do it"; is afraid of making mistakes; new work arouses visible fear and anxiety, or no response at all. May appear completely indifferent to school work; usually works slowly and/or hesitantly; when frustration occurs, may crumple up paper and do no more; is afraid and very anxious when faced with tests--may evidence hostile attitude or maintain rigid body posture while refusing to communicate with the teacher. Often gives up quickly on a test--may stare at paper, check off answers at random, or make little or no effort; may copy answers from others or from answer sheets if these are available.

5. *Shows listlessness, apathy, or low level of energy in the classroom;* facial expression changes little--is inscrutable, sad, forlorn, or resigned; may be frequently absent because of illness.

Glasser (1975b) indicates that failure-identity individuals--children and adults alike--are lonely. They are unable to establish caring relationships with others, and to become involved in useful or enjoyable activities with others. Therefore, they are unable to satisfy their basic needs for love and worth. Failure-identity people have two choices. They can fight back in angry or antisocial ways (acting out), or withdraw.

Causes of Behavior

> We have two pathways--the pathway of delinquency [acting out] and the pathway of withdrawal--that confirm the failure-identity. . .if we were to examine why some children succeed and others don't,

> we would find that there is one basic psychological difference. It is a very important difference, and it operates in school and everywhere else. Private patients who come to me in my office in West Los Angeles have exactly the same problem as children who are failing in school. They are lonely...
>
> You don't see "lonely" written in many psychology books. "Lonely" is a gut word, and "lonely" can happen to you and it can happen to me. So the people who are in charge of things don't like to use this word. They like to use other words that are much less sensitizing to us, words like alienated, isolated, culturally deprived, disadvantaged. Well, anyone who is lonely is alienated, isolated, disadvantaged, culturally deprived, but his basic problem is that he is lonely and he needs to gain a relationship with somebody else. The pathways of love and worthwhileness are closed to lonely people. All that the lonely one can do is follow the pathway of antagonism and the pathway of withdrawal. In his loneliness, he checks out or he fights back.(Glasser, 1971, p.7)

In the above quotation, Glasser is talking about the possibilities for the lonely child--fighting back against the people or the institutions which surround him, or withdrawing into his own world. The hostile-aggressive child fights back openly, purposefully, heading toward delinquency and possibly prison unless helped to find a place in the mainstream and a way to make useful contributions. The passive-aggressive child also fights back, but in more subtle, less openly destructive ways. The second option, withdrawal, is chosen by the child discussed in this chapter. But for all three, the HA, the PA, and the WFI child, the underlying feelings are the same--inadequacy, lack of involvement with others in productive tasks, lack of worth, and loneliness. It is the manifestation of these feelings that is different.

Dreikurs (1968) develops the notion, related to Glasser's concept of loneliness as a source of aberrant behavior, of the innate desire of humans to be part of a group, and only in doing so can they achieve cooperation, fulfillment, and normal behavior:

> The desire to be part of the group is basic to all human beings. Man is a social being, and can fully function only within the group. As long as he feels that he belongs, he can devote his energies to meeting the needs of the situation. . .He is born with the innate potential to function as a social being, to develop

> sufficient social feeling. Fully developed, it implies not only the awareness of having a place, but also the ability to play a constructive part in life. It is the basis for what can be called "normalcy," the basis for cooperation and fulfillment. Deficiency in its development restricts social function. (p. 16)

Dreikurs postulates that a well-adjusted and well-behaved child achieves social acceptance through conforming to the requirements of the group and by making useful contributions. A WFI child has not been able to achieve social acceptance or a place in the group, and seeks, through his behavior, to display inadequacy, a choice Dreikurs believes is psychologically the most damaging of all. Dreikurs shows how withdrawal serves as a protective device:

> A child who is passive, or whose antagonism is successfully beaten down, may be discouraged to such an extent that he cannot hope for any significance whatsoever. He expects only defeat and failure and stops trying. He hides himself behind *a display of real or imagined inferiority*. He uses his inability as a protection so that nothing will be required or expected of him. By avoiding participation or contribution, he tries to preclude more humiliating and embarrassing experiences. (p. 29)

With respect to children who cope with the necessity to function within the group by hiding behind a display of inadequacy, Dreikurs describes the effects of this behavior within school, emphasizing that children can become totally or partially conditioned to failure through the process of formal instruction:

> These children are discouraged to such a degree that they see no hope of success. Therefore, they no longer make any effort. Their discouragement may be total so that they actually become failures. Or they may be only partially discouraged and their deficiency consequently limited to a few activities. Most failures in scholastic progress belong in this category. Often the discouragement begins with the first formal instruction. . .Certain children, who have had no training in doing things for themselves, are unable to believe in their own ability to accomplish anything. Whenever they encounter any difficulty, they are inclined to give up altogether. Others may have been pre-

> disposed to such a defeatist attitude by the accomplishments of a competing brother or sister. We often find a pseudo-feeble-mindedness when the next older or younger sibling is particularly brilliant and successful. The fallacy of the child's own evaluation is seldom recognized even in a mental test, because he may perform as if he were really retarded.(p. 44)

Nine-Step Plan

Step 1. Teacher attitude: Never give up. Believe that the child can succeed. The withdrawn failure-image child is in many ways the hardest to reach. In the process of reaching out to draw this child back into the reality of classroom life, I have to be exceptionally and constantly aware of this child, patient, warm, caring, supportive, encouraging, and persevering. The process can't be hurried. The greater the degree of discouragement of the child, the longer it takes to achieve results. It is a long road back to involvement with others and feelings of self-worth. The two case studies following this chapter are success stories, each spanning two years. They are presented to encourage you, but I have had as many failures as successes with withdrawn failure-image children. The latter have been discouraging, because they involved equally as much effort and caring as the successes. However, I will add that with the successes, I had the full cooperation and support of the parents, and with the failures, there was no such cooperation or support.

Step 2. Establish a friendly relationship based on child's interests. The first thing I do with a WFI child is to find a way to establish a friendly relationship. This is critical. In order to help the child in school, I must make contact in a meaningful way through communication. So, I need to find something we can talk about that the child finds interesting. I can find many things to talk about, but unless the child's interest is strong enough to respond, I will not be able to make any headway in my task of becoming friendly with him. I have to show him that I care about and am interested in him just as he is now.

With two WFI children I worked with and failed to reach, I experienced anger at one point in the process--anger because the child did not respond. I mentioned this to a psychologist friend, and he said, "If you work patiently and over a considerable length of time with a child who is unresponsive, and find yourself feeling angry, then you can

be fairly certain that the child is seriously depressed." Childhood depression is frightening, the nadir of loneliness.

When working with a withdrawn child, I tell myself I won't give up, no matter how long it takes to get a response, and even though progress is slow. I have to believe that this child can succeed. I've found that a child's strengths and interests are the best avenues through which to begin establishing a friendly, caring, warm relationship, because there are things the child is generally willing and happy to talk about. Carol (case study) was most willing and even eager to talk about art work, horses, riding lessons, and her dad's farm. Al (case study) was willing to talk about handwriting, gangsters, and his drawings expressing violent content.

In almost every case, I've been able to reach a hostile-aggressive child through his strength and/or interest in athletics. There is an appropriate parallel between acting-out behavior and the physical nature of sports. When successful, I've reached WFIs through art and writing. Again, it seems the internal nature of these activities parallels the withdrawn, introverted nature of the child. In both cases, however, I attempt to channel already-existing behavior, feelings, strengths, and interests into creative, productive activities. The sources of difficulty are the same--loneliness and lack of a sense of worth--and the strategies are closely related, different only in the outward nature. Starting with a child's interests (Step 2), fosters a sense of worth, and increasing the child's involvement in class and school life (Step 3) fosters belonging.

At first, the communication is strictly aimed at recognizing the child as a likable, able, and worthy person. It has to be an enjoyable, person-to-person sharing. This means saying the child's name frequently, smiling, listening, laughing, and showing sincere interest. School-related activities may or may not be part of this initial sharing, depending upon the nature of the child's strengths and interests. If communication is difficult to establish, I just keep looking for anything the child would be willing to talk about.

Step 3. Involve child in class and school life. The second thing I do is to get the child helping in the classroom and relating to the group. When asked, the child is usually receptive to being a helper (running errands, distributing papers, running equipment, setting up and distributing science

equipment--doing any of the many jobs that have to be done every day). This kind of involvement allows the child to be useful. He is contributing something useful to the group, and this builds a sense of worth. It also helps to reduce the sense of loneliness of the withdrawn child, fostering a sense of belonging. He is interacting with others--teacher, school secretary, other children, and other adults in the school. I ask the staff to greet this child and exchange friendly pleasantries whenever they see him. This overall simple recognition and friendliness from many adults helps to establish a friendly environment in school as a whole.

The withdrawn failure-image child needs to become involved in productive ways with his peers in the classroom. If I recognize his strengths and interests in the group, and show that I value them, this helps to promote his involvement. When I talk with the child about his strengths and interests and casually involve a few other students (when admiring Al's handwriting or Carol's art work, and showing it to several nearby students at the same time), the others become curious and join the group to have a look. Generally, one or two will make spontaneous supportive remarks, adding to the general atmosphere of encouragement.

Step 4. Use classroom meetings. Classroom meetings provide the best method of increasing involvement, decreasing loneliness and isolation, and providing recognition, an important part of feeling worthy. Everyone is part of a classroom meeting, and because we sit in a circle, an atmosphere of intimacy is established. The "no right or wrong answers" eliminates the fear of failing. No one can fail in a classroom meeting, nor can anyone be put down. Even if the WFI child says nothing, I can cite him for listening carefully, and encourage him to share thoughts or ideas with a simple, "I'd be interested to know what you think." Because classroom meetings revolve around topics the children would like to talk about, or problems meaningful in their lives now, almost every child can be coaxed to share something in due time.

Step 5. Get child to verbalize feelings about school. Once the WFI child begins to communicate and share conversation

with me, I try in some way to get him to verbalize the way he feels about school. This is a positive and often necessary step. I then indicate, through active listening (T.E.T.--listening seriously and not trying to brush away or rationalize away the reality of the school situation for the child) and through what I say (recognizing the child's statement as reality and reflecting back the child's feelings I hear coming through) that it's O.K. to hate school, to be afraid, to think school is dumb or boring, to be angry, to feel that nobody likes you, to prefer staying home, or to say, "I am so stupid!" The way the child sees it is real for the child. When I say, with sincerity, "It sounds like school is an unpleasant experience for you," I verify and show understanding of the child's feelings. It is important to establish this understanding, to put myself in the child's place. So often, I hear a teacher respond to a child's honest statement of how school is for him or how he feels about school with statements such as "Well, if you'd just try harder, you'd do better or feel better," or, "If you'd do your work, you'd be more successful," or, "Come on! You can do it--I know you can!" This doesn't help. The only thing that matters is what the child thinks, and a failure-image child is convinced that he can't succeed.

Step 6. Make a plan using the child's initiative. Following this recognition of how the child feels about school, and a supportive statement that reflects back his feelings, I tell the child that I would like us to work together to make a plan that will make school a happier place for him. I will then ask direct questions, "How can we do this? Are there some things I can do differently, and are there some things that you would like to do differently so that you will be happier here? I'm glad you are here, but I want you to be glad you are here. That is the first priority."

The child invariably says, "I don't know," but he knows I care. This is an important part of our relationship. It also gives the child something to think about.

Then I will say, "Well, you think about it, and any time you think of something you let me know--right away. I don't care how busy I am, or what's happening. When you have a suggestion that will make things better for you, I want to hear it--right away. In this class, you are not going to fail--nobody fails in here."

This usually gets the child thinking. The initiative I've requested may be a long time coming, but eventually there always comes a hesitant, "Would it be all right if...," "Do you think I could...," "Could I try...," "Would it be O.K. to use..." Whatever the child requests, we try--no questions, no hesitations; just instant, sincere support, and some low-keyed guidance. The child has taken the first step by saying, "I want to try."

One child with a background of great deprivation found reading and writing extremely difficult. He was deficient in vocabulary development, he couldn't spell, he lacked knowledge of punctuation rules, and he could not tell a sentence from a phrase. At first, I asked him to tell me about an experience, and I wrote what he said. He then copied what I wrote. One day, he asked me if he could copy a page from a book he was reading as his writing assignment. He seemed eager to do this, and I said, "Yes, go ahead." This was the first time he had ever taken the initiative. His concentration while copying the page was intense. Several times, he came to me to ask how to pronounce a word and what it meant. When he was finished, he proudly showed me his "writing," and then voluntarily read it to me. I can't tell you what was going on inside his head, but whatever it was, it was exciting to him. I asked him why he liked that particular page. He said, "The animals are talking to each other, and it is funny."

This child made the same request three or four more times, and I gave him encouragement. He repeated what he had done the first time--checked on the meaning of new words and how they should be pronounced, showed delight in his writing, and read his finished piece to me. Then he started asking questions--what kind of food did an animal eat; did the baby bunnies always stay with their mother; did I think animals talked to one another? Some of his questions I couldn't answer. I asked him what he thought. He fantasized about the animals, and the more he fantasized, the more he talked.

Then one day, he wrote three-quarters of a page by himself, checking with me now and then on the spelling of a word. He also asked if he was writing sentences. The copying exercises had somehow stimulated an interest in correct spelling and sentences. His verbal fantasizing gave him ideas for animal stories of his own.

Step 7. Make success happen. The thing a WFI child does need is success--however small and in any area. I see my job as making success possible, and not necessarily in the traditional three Rs. I prefer to start with something I know the child thinks he can succeed in. If he makes a suggestion, I know he thinks he can do something--no matter how small--successfully. Thatis why it is important to establish strengths and interests and to work through these to build strength in critically weak areas. For example, Carol's interest and talent in art, and Al's handwriting and interest in violence (see case studies) provided starting points to build successes because they were relevant to children's lives.

I remember when Al (case study) first took the initiative. He approached me one day and said, "Last year, Rick and Paul cleaned the erasers for the teachers once a month. Could Burt and I have that job?" I said, "Why, yes. Go see Mr. D. (the principal) right now, and find out all about it." Al was so pleased to have this job. He and Burt fooled around a little at first. They cleaned erasers while we were at recess, and pounded a whole box of dirty erasers against our chalkboard one day. The board was covered with rectangular blotches and chalk dust filtered through the room, but they managed the job competently and responsibly all year. Al's organizational and management skills became one of his outstanding strengths during fifth grade.

When anyone succeeds in something, the accompanying feelings are good. The good feelings build psychological strength. The success can be reinforced through praise (sincere and short) and recognition (a simple "interesting idea or plan," "well done," "good thinking"). No big deal--but sincere.

Step 8. Enlist aid of other class members. There are always a number of children whose aid I can enlist to provide encouragement. I'll casually and privately say to one or two, "So-and-so needs encouragement-- a little word of support from you now and then would mean a lot." Mutual support, encouragement, and assistance are fundamental themes in all we do, and the children respond beautifully to this. Whenever I see a child support a classmate in any way, I make it a point to tell that child that Inoticed, and that I admire that kind of generosity and caring.

Step 9. Determine how child learns. Finding out how the WFI child learns is very helpful in aiding him to achieve some success. Often, a child who reads something three or four times gains little meaning from it. This is very discouraging, as well as time-consuming. The same child often learns by listening. Because reading has proven so difficult, he has learned to listen carefully during discussions of reading material, or when the teacher talks about a subject. Nonreaders or poor readers learn to glean as much information as possible from pictures in books. These are the kinds of things I look for. Several WFI children I've had in class were primarily interested in art. Another had a fantastic visual memory. He knew where everything in the room was, could describe accurately and in great detail where signs, lights, clocks, windows, and so on were in the school.

With a fourth- or fifth-grade WFI child who has given up on reading and writing, I've learned to use my imagination. I like to approach these basic areas by finding out how the child learns (aurally, through pictures, appreciation of or memorizing shapes, colors, details), encouraging the child to talk with me about these things, and then writing what the child has said. The child then recopies his composition and reads it to me. I have found this a good way to start. The child enjoys it. After we do this for a while, the child's attitude toward writing and reading becomes more positive. His self-confidence grows. Eventually, he's willing and sometimes even eager to work with me in more traditional ways on reading and writing. I don't try to teach the child reading and writing skills in traditional ways and with traditional materials to start, because it doesn't work. The child won't even try.

I discovered that one WFI child was highly distracted by sounds. He heard all kinds of things inside and outside the classroom. When I noticed this, I asked him to close his eyes and tell me all the things he heard. I wrote what he said. His ability to connect sounds with the things that made the sounds was very good. Out of this exercise grew an experience with free verse that delighted the child (and me), and awakened motivation to read and write.

If a WFI child's interest is captured by pictures, I'll say, "Tell me what you think is going on," and I'll take a half-page or more of

dictation as he talks. I'll ask him to read it back to me and then copy it over in his own handwriting, saying, "This is a fine story."

I have noticed that after taking dictation from a WFI child six, seven, eight times, having him read each composition to me, and then asking him to recopy each in his own handwriting, the child's reading and writing skills take a sudden spurt. One day the child surprises me by reading something that is not in his own words, or writing something on his own. I believe that some of the skills taught since Kindergarten are latent, and that, all of a sudden, the child begins to use them. This is when I know that the child is starting to move toward an image of success. It's perhaps a tentative, and always fragile, situation. So, I encourage, make a few suggestions aimed at stretching the child's efforts just a little more, keep him talking and sharing, and give him a little more responsibility within the room.

It usually isn't as difficult to get a failure-image child moving in math as it is in reading or writing. I think this is so because in elementary school, especially first grade through third, reading, in the minds of young children, is what school is all about--90% of the game. If you don't learn to read, you're a failure--that's it! I also believe that young children believe that if they haven't learned to read by the end of first grade, they are a failure. This is where it starts. Now, we don't say, "Kid, you're a failure," but they get all kinds of important messages from their teachers and their parents other than what is said--all kinds of body language, including minute changes in facial expressions, what our eyes and mouth tell them, hand movements, our total posture. The tone and degree of urgency in the voice and the speed of delivery all contain important messages that children read accurately. We are often unaware of the messages we send without using words, especially, the "Kid-you're-not-making-it" message.

From first through third grades, children learn to read (it is hoped), and from third grade on, they read to learn. It is at this vital transitional period that too many kids say, "The heck with it! I give up!" A child who sees most of his classmates reading well by third grade and knows that he still can't read figures it is hopeless. He has tried and tried, but he still can't read. Even if he keeps plugging away, he figures that the others are so far ahead already that

he'll never be able to catch up.

All of us have experienced failure at something even though we tried and tried repeatedly. And all of us at some point in our lives have said, "The heck with it, I give up," about something. We may really want to play tennis, or basketball, or golf, write poetry, play the violin, or paint beautiful pictures, but there may come a point when we say to ourselves, "I guess this isn't for me. I've really tried, given it the best I've got, but I'm not going to make it."

Often these things are not life-and-death matters. We aren't defeated by it. There are other options open to us, and successful people pursue other options. But think how the failure to read affects a little child in school. If it's 90% of the game, then failure in this area is a terrible blow to self-esteem. Our whole culture is dedicated to the premise that every child shall learn to read. This is where the school system places the emphasis. Parents have put increasing pressure on kindergarten teachers to teach their children to read.

We are all aware that children develop physically, socially, and emotionally at different rates. Each child is an individual. And so it would seem logical that children learn to read at different rates--each according to his own readiness and stage of development. Not all children are reading at the end of first grade, but this is okay. What is not okay is the message school and parents transmit to children--"There's something wrong with you if you are not reading at the end of first grade." William Glasser once said the 11th commandment is, "Thou shalt read at the end of first grade." How much more encouraging we would be if we said to all those little kids at the beginning of first grade, "By the end of fifth grade, you will be good readers."

By fourth or fifth grade, a WFI who refuses to do math, or says, "I can't do it," or, "I hate math," usually has not learned the math facts. At fifth grade, mastery of the math facts is essential. It is impossible to add long or large columns of numbers, subtract across four digits, multiply by one, two, and three digits across multiple digits, and do long division without knowing the math facts. So I start with intensive drill on the math facts--taking small chunks and rewarding success with praise and stars. This is where I use peer support intensively. A friend drills the failure-image child wherever they want

to work--outside the room, in a corner of the room, under a table. If I concentrate only on math facts and basic operations--addition, subtraction, multiplication, and simple division--with a WFI child of average of better intelligence, I'm convinced I can succeed in teaching him this much. And, because I'm convinced he can learn this much, I'm usually able to convince him of the same. The rest of the fifth-grade math curriculum is ignored for this child until he succeeds at basic operations.

Carol

Carol came to me in fourth grade. Every day during the first week of school, she indicated to me through words, facial expressions, or other body language that she was very tired or did not feel well. Also, she behaved as though she never heard a word I said. When I passed by her desk after having given instructions or direction for an assignment, I would find that she was not doing the work, most often did not have the proper materials on her desk. She would be either just sitting and staring out the window or into space, or drawing with her magic markers or crayons. Before I could say a word, she would heave a great sigh or tell me (in a very soft, almost pathetic little voice) that she was so-o-o tired, or had a headache, a stomach-ache, hurt arm, painful toe, whatever. She was very convincing. It is hard to be stern with a child who is very slender, pale, and appears to struggle to summon enough energy to speak above a whisper. The natural reaction would be to think, "This poor child!"

Carol approached me when we weren't working to talk about different things--nothing to do with school. Always the soft voice, weak little smiles, compliments for me on "what a nice teacher you are," "I like your dress," "Is your hair naturally curly? It always looks so nice." "When is your birthday?" These were attempts to be friendly and caring, but the underlying message was, "I am so helpless, so dumb, so tired--life is such a burden (sigh! sigh! sigh!). What also came through was that she had an intelligent, sensitive, and very observant

mind. This child was no dummy!

I checked with Carol's third-grade teacher. She told me that Carol had done nothing but draw and color in third grade--with or without permission. She referred to Carol as "impossible"--a total scatterbrain, a poor student who lived in a world of her own, talking all day with her friend Mary, was occasionally mouthy, and feigned total lack of understanding when told to do her work. Her parting remark was, "She and her friend nearly drove me crazy--I wanted to shake them both, but then, poor things, they just don't have much upstairs."

When it was math time, Carol would sigh and say with a little sad smile, "I'm just stupid--I can't even add and subtract." During writing, she would daydream or draw little pictures. When encouraged to write, she would heave a sigh and say in a small voice, "I can't think of anything to say!" My, my, but this was a sad story! But this little girl was a good actress. Carol was 1.5 years below grade-level in reading, she seemed unable to put together a sentence on paper, and testing indicated that her computation skills in addition were fair; in subtraction, poor; in multiplication, zilch. The mention of division produced an absolutely blank expression on her face.

There was no difficulty establishing a friendly relationship with Carol. She was delighted to talk to me all day about her horse, her dad's farm, all the things she and Mary did together after school and on weekends--anything except school-related matters.

Carol's major strength (in the classroom) was easy to identify. Those magic markers, colored pens, crayons, and colored pencils were always on the desk, and almost always in use. (Note--Carol sat as far from me as possible--in a corner, up against a wall (with her back to me), or smack up against the bookcase by the windows (back, again, to me). She socialized quietly with her friend Mary. Most of the time, the communication between the two was not very noticeable (whispers, talking while looking at each other's paper--no turn of the head). But careful observation revealed that they talked together constantly. Mary would often shoot a quick look in my direction to see if I was watching. Carol never looked in my direction during work time. She tuned me out totally, except when she wished to talk to me.)

In effect, Carol had developed a coping mechanism in school that

worked. She was very much in control of what she did and did not do in the classroom. She exhibited no fear and no anxiety. I in no way threatened her. How she felt about being a failure by the standards of her grade level, I did not find out until much later. Her coping mechanisms and her behavior were indicative of a very independent spirit. In no way did she indicate that she was intimidated by authority. She had, however, given up on school. She accepted this, and spent her time drawing.

Carol was an only child. Her parents had been divorced when she was very young. Our resource teacher (who acts as a consultant, working with teachers to provide additional assistance to individual children who have learning difficulties) had worked with Carol over the years, and whenever she or any of the staff spoke about Carol, they did so with affection, a smile, and often said, "Poor Carol."

Carol set me up properly the first week of school. She told me she hated math, was dumb, she was so far behind in reading she could never catch up. But I was suspicious of the tactics, sensing that Carol was intelligent and was employing some very effective coping mechanisms to avoid doing school work. So, the second week of school, I told Carol and Mary that all I wanted them to do was to draw and paint all day, and that I'd like them to put their work up in the room--on the walls and bulletin boards. "Decorate the room," I said, "and if you produce more work than the room can hold, start on the halls. Anything you need is at your disposal--magic markers, paint, chalk, glue, paste." They were speechless--then they started to giggle. Carol said, "Do you mean it?" with an unbelieving grin on her face. "Sure," I replied. "We need to beautify our room. I'd really appreciate it if you two would take over this job."

They tackled this job with enthusiasm, working away at their desks or in the sink area, involved and happy. During these hours of joyful productive art work, Carol displayed an abundance of energy, checked out finished work with me, smiled, laughed, planned, and explained to me some of the media combinations she was experimenting with. No headaches, no stomach aches, no fatigue, no sighs. I began to think that my suspicions were correct. I talked with Carol about her creations and asked questions. She reponded quickly, to the point, and in-

sightfully. The bulletin board was soon covered with art work. Carol used color and media in a way that indicated a high level of creativity and craftsmanship.

During the next week, Carol was drawing a picture of a horse at her desk. I asked her to tell me about her picture. She launched into an enthusiastic account of her horseback riding lessons, and a description of her favorite horse--the one she was drawing. I suggested she write a sentence or two about how she felt about this horse. I said, "See if you can find a format for writing a few sentences that is interesting--like writing in a circle around the horse." "Oh," she said, as a smile spread across her face, "you mean place the words in a way so they make an interesting shape! Okay!" She wrote several sentences.

Thereafter, she wrote several sentences on each picture she made, experimenting with word shapes, styles of handwriting, and formats to integrate the drawing and the writing. Her major interest, at this point, was to have the written words become an integrated part of the total artistic composition. This child was delightful!

A gradual transition took place. Carol began to be interested in what she had to say. One day, I noticed that her drawing filled the paper. I watched her complete the drawing. She was aware that I was watching, but she didn't look up or say anything. I moved on. A little later, I noticed that she was writing on a sheet of notebook paper. Carol had begun to paint pictures with words. She moved quickly into free verse. She wrote about the sun, the stars, the wind, flowers, trees, and water. Almost all of her writing was illustrated. Poetry became an absorbing interest.

Carol and Mary took riding lessons together. Capitalizing on their mutual love of horses and fondness for working together, I suggested that they get picture books about horses from the library and read out loud fifteen minutes a day with our college aides (I had a different aide every day) wherever they liked--in the hall, at the round table, by the lockers, in the library conference room. Each could take a turn reading a paragraph, including the aide. (In all oral reading, I or the aide get our turn to read.) Both girls liked this idea. They read aloud fifteen minutes a day all year. As soon as the aide arrived, the girls scheduled their reading time during the day.

Carol was now writing and reading, and only six weeks had gone by. Carol, Mary, and I had a good thing going. Carol was beginning to enjoy school, she stopped complaining about fatigue and headaches, and was interacting with me frequently. She told me that I was the best teacher in the world, and every day I received some little note and picture expressing her affection for me.

The time had come to tackle math. I took the two girls aside and opened up the question of math. Carol immediately said, "I hate math!" I replied, "I know, but a smart girl like you is going to have to know how to budget her money, count change, balance a checkbook, and fill out an income tax statement when she's a famous artist." Carol laughed and shook her head from side to side. Round one for me.

I proposed that we work out a plan so that she and Mary could do their math together and concentrate on addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division. I suggested that they start with addition and subtraction. On each two-week contract, they would decide how many math cards they would do in the easy sequence. (There are three tracks--easy, intermediate, and advanced.) They were to check all of their own work (as do all of the children), let me know how things were coming along, and ask me for help whenever they needed it.

Carol's independent "I-like-to-make-my-own-decisions" nature was a major factor in my placing responsibility with her for assisting with the planning, checking, and deciding when to ask for help if she needed it. Carol did not work well with authoritarian teachers. Carol soon told me that the sequence was too easy. She wanted to move to the intermediate track. (Both girls knew how to add and subtract, but had pretended they didn't.)

As Carol and Mary approached the multiplication cards in the intermediate sequence, we had a conference. Neither knew the multiplication facts. I asked them if we could come up with a plan for learning the multiplication tables that would be fun. Carol voiced the conviction that there was no way that learning the multiplication tables could be fun.

I said, "Well, let's try a few things. Let's start with the two-times table..."

"Oh, Mrs. M., we know the two-times tables!"

"Good, let's begin with the tens..."

"We know the tens!"

"Okay, can you count by fives?"

"Yes."

"Well, we're making rapid progress. Let's see how much of the threes table you know." They new half.

"Suppose you make designs in sets of threes with the cuisenaire rods--build or arrange them any way you like; or draw sets of three flowers, ladybugs, whatever, on big sheets of paper using magic markers, paint..."

These ideas appealed to their imaginations and aesthetic sense. They began with cuisenaire rods, and eagerly showed me the designs they created. They also drew sets of three objects on paper. We then discussed the threes table. I pointed out to them that they knew 1 x 3, 2 x 3, 3 x 3, 5 x 3, and 10 x 3 before they started. That was half the table. The task wasn't really as big as they thought.

Working together, they studied the multiplication tables, taking turns quizzing one another. All of this was verbalized math, not written math. Both girls were learning by listening, not by reading print. I gave each a sheet with all the multiplication tables, and suggested they cut out one set at a time. When they both knew it, they were ready to throw that table away. I made it clear that each had the responsibility to be the other's teacher. At the same time that they were learning math facts, I had them work on the multiplication cards in their math sequence, using the facts table when necessary.

One day, Mary approached me and asked, "What time is it?" I was surprised, as there was a giant clock above my head. Carol, realizing my surprise, said, "Mrs. M., I'll teach Mary to tell time. I'm tired of having her ask me all day, 'What time is it?'"

"Fine," I replied.

An hour later, Carol informed me that Mary knew how to tell time, and that she would give her friend practice every day so she wouldn't forget.

A week later, I had lunch with Mary's mother, a good friend. I mentioned that I had been completely unaware that Mary did not know how to tell time. My friend laughed and said, "For two years, I, my husband, and Mary's older sister and brother have been trying to teach

Mary to tell time--unsuccessfully. Mary came home from school one day last week with Carol, and demonstrated for all of us that she could tell time. That Carol is really something! She accomplished in one hour what we all failed to do in two years!"

Carol made good progress in all areas during fourth grade. As a fifth-grader, we began to see what she was capable of doing. In September of fifth-grade year, the Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test - Level II (fifth grade) was given to the whole class. Carol's grade-level equivalent was 5.5. I was elated, but my discussion of the test results was muted, emphasizing the progress she had made, going over the complete test with her, and repeating what I frequently tell all of the children, "The difference between poor readers and good readers is that good readers read a lot."

Carol was disppointed with her performance on the Stanford Diagnostic Test. In April of her fifth-grade year, the Stanford Achievement Test was given. Carol told me that she was determined to do well on this test. She removed herself to a quiet place in the room, and used the full time allotment for each section to check and double-check. Her grade-equivalent score on vocabulary was 7.6 and 8.4 in comprehension. After correcting her test, I called her at home to tell her the results. She was very pleased with them. I was ecstatic!

At the end of the fifth grade, Carol's math skills were at grade level. She had memorized all the math facts--addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division--and could handle problems in basic operations competently. Math was not her favorite subject, but she expressed confidence that she could do it and it was "okay."

Writing and drawing continued to be her favorite subjects during fifth grade. She wrote two- and three-page stories, accounts of personal experiences, and poetry. For the Young Author's Conference, she put together a long and large book of her poetry, with beautiful art work throughout.

Growth in several other areas was significant. As her failure image in school subsided, and she felt successful, Carol began to interact more with all of her classmates. Her growing self-confidence and positive self-image manifested themselves in classroom meetings and discussions. As a beginning fourth grader, Carol had not spoken in group

discussions. She began to participate about the middle of fourth grade. By the end of fifth grade, she expressed herself frequently and confidently, revealing a deep sensitivity to other people's feelings and viewpoints, and a high degree of inferential thinking.

One particular classroom meeting during Carol's fifth-grade year stands out in my mind. It involved moving the quiet reading platform and rearranging the room. Carol listened to the various proposals, summarized them, and suggested that the group vote. The proposal that easily won required that two boys move their desks. One of the boys, Chris, was upset almost to the point of tears. He did not want to move. Carol approached me and said, "Chris is very unhappy, and I think he feels that we have ganged up on him. I feel badly about that." I suggested that she share her thoughts with the whole group. She did. Chris said, "Yes," but could say no more. He started moving things around in his desk in an attempt to keep from crying. Another boy said, "But we live in a democracy, and in a democracy, the majority rules."

Quietly, Carol said, "I think we can do better than that. Chris, is there any other place you would be happy with for your desk and your friend's other than the place where you are now?"

"Yes, if we could sit in the corner over there, that would be okay."

Carol and Mary were sitting in that particular corner. They offered to move, and the problem was solved. I was very impressed with this display of empathy, concern, and willingness to make concessions on Carol's part.

Carol developed another very important talent. She was the peacemaker when two or more of the fifth-grade girls had a falling out. She encouraged and assisted conflicting parties to continue talking until the problem was resolved. She managed to do this quietly, calmly, and without taking sides. I marveled at this ability as it was unusual among fifth-graders.

As a fifth-grader, Carol had no difficulty following rules or schedules without teacher supervision. She did excellent work on academic contracts. Carol liked to be treated as a mature, responsible person. She rejected teachers (in a quiet way) who were authoritarian. In all of my interactions with Carol, I treated her the way she liked to

be treated. We discussed all of her work together, but I always let her make the decisions as to how much work in each area she wished to attempt during any two-week contract. I outlined goals I though she could achieve, but gave her considerable flexibility as to how to get there. She never let me down. If anything, she began to demand more of herself than I would have, and she always followed through. Carol did become receptive to my suggestions and constructive criticism. Never in my teaching career have I enjoyed a relationship with a student more than the one I had with Carol. As far as I was concerned, it was ideal. She wanted and took responsibility for major decision-making in her own education.

However, I was aware that Carol would undoubtedly encounter authoritarian teachers during her remaining school years. I discussed this matter with her privately near the end of fifth grade. As a class, we had gone through the problem-solving process many times, and I worked with Carol individually on how to use this process with an authoritarian teacher. I emphasized that in her student role, the important thing always was to behave in such a way that would be most beneficial to herself. I said, "In all interactions with teachers, ask yourself this question when you make a decision to act or behave in a certain way: 'Will it help me?'" The essence of my message was, "You can't change teachers, but your job is to get through school successfully."

I encouraged her to discuss problem situations with teachers in a courteous, respectful, and thoughtful way. When confronted with assignments that might cause her to balk because they were inflexible, I suggested that she come up with a well-thought-out alternative plan that would accomplish the same goal and then present this to the teacher for discussion.

My final words to her on this subject were to always keep in mind that teachers are human beings--they have strengths, failings, feelings, joys, and problems just like everyone else. Most of them are nice people who care about kids and teaching. "Some things, Carol, you will not be able to change, and it is best to accept these situations. But if you treat your teachers with respect, courtesy, and friendliness, you will generally find that they will treat you the same way."

During the final conference of fifth grade, Carol's mother told me

that during third grade, Carol had frequently said, "I am the dumbest kid in my class," that she had often cried when she talked about school, and that she had been frequently absent because of illness.

When Carol went to middle school, I recommended that she be placed with a team of teachers who also had participated in and were practicing the new techniques presented in inservices on learning how particular students learn more effectively, effective communication techniques with students, problem-solving strategies, and Glasser's classroom meetings and discipline techniques. A week before school started, I met with these teachers and shared with them all I had learned about Carol's learning style, and various techniques that worked to maximize her achievement. They were grateful, and applied what they learned. Periodically, I checked on Carol's progress. Her sixth-grade teachers reported that Carol was not only a high achiever, but a great asset to the team and a delight to teach. Of all the students I've ever had, Carol taught me the most about what effective teaching is all about.

Al

As a fourth-grader, Al was unusually sober-faced, and rarely smiled. He interacted with peers infrequently. He sat by himself or with one long-time friend, Burt, and only played with him at recess. Interaction with me, at first, was zero. The impression I got very early was that Al had given up on school. He was withdrawn, spoke little, and lacked the usual spontaneity of a nine-year-old. I also suspected that he was suppressing a lot of anger. His inscrutable face and his lack of involvement in the classroom caused me immediate concern. He chose to sit in the corner farthest from my desk--sometimes with his friend, and sometimes alone. It seemed to me that he just wanted to fade into the wall.

Al spoke and sometimes giggled and laughed with his friend, Burt, in class and at recess, but on the whole he rarely participated in classroom activities. He never asked me questions, volunteered information, or spoke in discussions or classroom meetings. When I made a point of speaking to him, he gave softly-answered, defensive "yes," "no," or "I don't know" responses. In classroom meetings, when I would ask him

if he would like to share his thoughts or opinions, he always said, "No," emphatically, his response revealing a bit of hostility. That was the end of the conversation. He avoided eye contact with me completely. I noticed that Al avoided interaction with all adults in school.

At first, Al played only with Burt at recess, and they behaved very immaturely. They giggled, whispered, or talked softly with one another, apart from the activities of the others, and then bugged their classmates by snatching hats and running off, picking up a ball that came near them and kicking or throwing it away so that someone in the game had to chase it a good distance, kicking down a snowman or a fort that kids were building, or by teasing and taunting. Often Al and Burt would go into the bushes near school, giggling and whispering, and then come dashing out, do something foolish, and then run away. When I was on recess duty, students frequently complained about Al and Burt's behavior.

Occasionally, a fight erupted at recess or in the halls when I wasn't around. I would hear about it from another teacher if a child in my room were involved. If Al was implicated, his face registered fear. I do not think he ever got into a fistfight in school. He was careful and not overly aggressive, but was often part of the fringe group around two kids who were fighting. He would chant, along with the others, "Fight! Fight! Fight!" Sometimes during recess (when I wasn't on duty), the "group" (the kids fighting and the surrounding or fringe element--which sometimes included Al and Burt) would be sent to the office. On these occasions, Al nearly went to pieces. He was terrified, thinking his parents would be called and told that he was misbehaving.

At first, there was no way for me to interact with Al. When I attempted to speak with him, he kept his eyes down or shifted them constantly. He avoided looking at me, and the distinct message I got from his body language was, "Leave me alone--go away." I said "hello" to Al every morning when he came in the room. For at least a month, he gave no indication that he heard me. After a while, he'd look at me, but say nothing and go to his seat. But eventually, he began to look at me (recognition that he had been greeted), and perhaps two months into the year, he finally said, "Hi." I made a point of talking to him briefly every day during class--commenting on what he was doing, especially writing or drawing--reinforcing anything done well, no matter how small.

These were very conscious acts. The major initial strategy was to develop a friendly relationship with Al and to initiate conversation to which he would respond. Academically, he did little and didn't seem to care. He worked slowly and carefully, but gave up quickly. During the first two months of fourth grade, he rarely completed any work, and just kept saying, "I can't do it." "I don't have anything to write about." He took out books, but never talked about what he read. Often he seemed confused and almost paralyzed when it came to math. The "I-give-up" attitude came through loud and clear in math, plus an element of fear that he appeared to be fighting to control. His hopeless, resigned attitude was frightening to me. I also noticed right away that he wrote his name in tiny letters. Other letters were written normal-sized. In writing his name so small, I think he was saying a lot about his feelings about himself.

Early in the fourth grade, I gave the children a questionnaire to fill out for the purpose of getting to know them better. It contained approximately 15 open-ended questions. Some of the questions were, "I like to...," "I don't like...," "My favorite color is...," "One thing I am afraid of is..." Al either left questions blank, or answered some "I don't know." The question he did answer was, "One thing I don't like is..." In the space that followed, he wrote in large capital letters, "I HATE SCHOOL." This response gave me the first opening for meaningful interaction with Al. I said, "Al, I noticed that you wrote 'I hate school' in really big letters. You must feel very strongly about this." He replied, "Yes, I hate school," with strong feeling. I asked him why. He said it was dumb and boring, amidst giggles and sideways glances at his friend, Burt. Nonetheless, it was a beginning.

I thought a lot about Al's "I HATE SCHOOL" statement. I asked myself, "What must it be like to have to go to a place you hate every weekday from 9:00 to 3:30? What would you feel?" From what I observed, and knowing Al's feelings about school, it seemed to me that he must see himself as a nonentity or failure. School, for Al, was a painful experience. Something had gotten badly out of whack. I wanted Al to be able to say out loud, right there in the classroom, "I hate school," and have that recognized and accepted as a statement of reality. I made no attempt to pass over it, change his mind, or talk him out of it. Nor

was I going to be upset by it.

Sometime later, I spoke privately with Al. "Al, I feel badly that school is a terrible experience for you. Maybe, together, we can work things out so that things will get better for you. I would like to know what I can do to make school a more fun or enjoyable place for you." He just nodded his head, but didn't say anything. I didn't give up.

An important step in my plan for Al was to identify his strengths. I noticed right away that his handwriting (printing and cursive) was absolutely beautiful. In a low-keyed way, I started recognizing Al's handwriting in the group by saying, "Al, your handwriting is beautiful," and casually showing a paper to a group of kids who were near. Others would hear my comments and come over to have a look. I made my comments brief. I didn't make a big deal over it. Al was more responsive and showed pleasure--a little smile, brief eye contact with me--after this simple recognition.

It didn't take long to discover that Al had a flair for drawing and all art activities. His drawings were original, highly imaginative, and done with authority. I would ask Al to tell me about his drawings, mention specific details, compositions, or color schemes that I liked for this reason or that, and I encouraged him to draw. Drawing excited Al. He didn't like to write, so I said, "Draw what you have to say." I gave him much time to draw--during reading and math, as well. I wanted to see what would happen. Drawing was the avenue through which I felt I could establish a relationship with Al. He talked freely about his drawings with me, began looking me in the eye as he spoke, and our conversations provided many opportunities to laugh together. I had fun and so did Al. The group became as interested in Al's drawings as I was, and he obtained much support for his drawing from his peers. Thus, he could begin to interact with his peers on a larger scale.

You might wonder if the other children resented the fact that Al had so much time to draw. Occasionally, a child would say, "How come Al gets to draw so much?" I would say, as friend to friend, "I think Al needs to draw a lot," or, "It makes him feel good about being in school. He's starting to smile more." The children understood, and nobody really complained.

What was particularly interesting about Al's drawing was its

theme: violence. It was all violence--torture chambers with an infinite variety of torture devices; war, complete with planes, bombs, cannons, machine guns, rifles, and wounded and dead soldiers; and car accidents or junk yards filled with wrecked cars. The war theme--planes, anti-aircraft, bombs, and soldiers fighting on the ground--is a favorite amongst fourth- and fifth-grade boys, but they usually use a variety of themes in their free-time art work. Not Al. He portrayed only violence, gleefully. Al excelled in the work he did with our art teacher, but all work in this class was planned by the teacher in a structured manner. Al's work was always selected by the art teacher for exhibits.

As Al began to write, the war and violence theme again appeared--consistently. He was very interested in the Mafia, and wrote a composition about a gang slaying. When I read it, I found it confusing--incomplete sentences, little punctuation. So I asked him to explain it to me. He did so with considerable enthusiasm and giggling. He thought it was funny, and so did the other boys. I think Al thought I was going to preach to him about the theme. I ignored the giggling and Al's obvious embarrassment, and proceeded to review the structure of the writing and his choice of words. I asked him if he could think of a more specific word here and there that would provide sharpness or add color to the writing. One sentence I remember: "There was a pool of blood on the floor." I asked Al if he could describe that more vividly for the reader. He added "red" in front of blood, and after more questions from me, the sentence expanded to "Bright red blood oozed from the hole the bullet had made as it shattered his face, making a big puddle on the wood floor." He really got into that sentence, and walked around reading it to his friends. He also got involved when he saw that I wasn't going to criticize the theme that he had chosen. Then I said, "Al, are you interested in the gang slaying kind of thing?" He said yes--that he had read something about Al Capore. I suggested we talk with our librarian and see if she could locate some books about the Al Capone era and organized crime during the 1920s and 1930s.

Our librarian obtained several books from the middle schools on the subject of major gangsters and organized crime. Al was delighted and intrigued. He would periodically bring one of these books to my desk and show me pictures of various outstanding criminals, telling me

about what they had done and what had happened to them, with much giggling at first, and more seriously as time went on. Essentially, I was saying, "It's okay to be interested in gangsters and their activities." I was also encouraging his interest in this subject through reading and writing. Not only was he reading and writing, he was talking to me more and more, and he was coming close to me (i.e., in physical distance).

His initial writing didn't make a lot of sense. With each composition, I asked him to explain it to me a little more, and as he talked, I'd say, "Oh, let's put that in," and I'd squeeze his spoken word in between the lines. Gradually, his interest grew in making his writing clear to the reader and selecting just the right details. He began to ask me to help him find the right word and check out a paragraph to see if it made sense before going on. Other children naturally got involved in this, and Al's interaction with the boys increased. They loved his gangster stories!

I also asked Al if he would be willing to take charge of the handwriting program. Three times a week, we watch a three-minute cassette which has no sound, but shows a hand tracing the letters to be practiced. Following each cassette, the children complete a practice sheet. Al was eager to take charge of this project. He did a fine job. To increase involvement in classroom life, I asked Al to deliver messages, get supplies from the office--lots of little things to help him feel that he was contributing.

During the fourth-grade year, Al and his friend Burt were in charge of cleaning erasers once a week for the third floor. They'd collect all the erasers, clean them, and then bring them back to the individual rooms. This activity increased Al's involvement and verbal interaction with other adults in the school in a responsible way. Within the classroom, I arranged for Al to work with small groups of different children in various science, social studies, and language arts activities, sometimes with his friend and sometimes not.

Classroom meetings provide a wonderful way to involve children like Al who are withdrawn or isolated. Al rarely said anything in classroom meetings, but there were opportunities to recognize him in different ways. At least once during each classroom meeting, I would say something like, "Al, is there anything you would like to share with

us?" or "Al, I notice that you have been listening very carefully to the discussion. I would be interested in hearing what you think." He usually said, "No," with or without giggles, but he had been recognized. Later on in the year, he would occasionally say something, prefacing his remarks with, "This is dumb, but...," or, "Well, I don't know if I should say this because it's probably stupid..." (with giggles), and I would encourage him to share his thoughts.

During fourth grade, I talked openly with Al and Burt about their immature behavior at recess. I told them what I saw them doing, and asked them if it was helping them. They'd say, "No-o-o" in a goofy kind of way and start giggling. The presence of fifth-graders kept the immature behavior under control somewhat. It wasn't until Al was a fifth-grader that I was able to make a lot of headway in this area.

Al's mother attended the first parent conference during fourth grade. I mentioned his strengths and a few concerns, then outlined what I was going to work on. I requested that both parents attend the second conference and they did. I particularly wanted Al's father to be present, as I had never met him. I wanted him to hear my concerns firsthand, and also to assess the way he responded to the school situation, to me, and to my strategies for helping Al overcome his failure image.

I told the parents about Al's strengths first--talent in art and beautiful handwriting. The reading test indicated grade-level achievement. I showed them the progress he had made in writing, and talked about the positive change in his attitude toward school. I also told them that I thought Al was very bright.

Then I proceeded to concerns. I showed them the "I HATE SCHOOL" statement; talked about the withdrawal, inscrutable face, lack of verbalization, and immature behavior at recess early in the year. Considerable progress had been made, but we had a long way to go. With math, there was a mental block. I suspected that Al had a lot of bottled up feelings which accounted for the fact that his face rarely showed much emotion. I indicated that his expression, the "I HATE SCHOOL" statement, the fear he displayed about making mistakes, and the immature behavior for his age were major concerns and needed to be worked on. Bottled up feelings come out in some way some time, usually, in inappropriate behaviors. If this problem was not attended to, it would continue

to grow and, most likely, erupt in some kind of explosion in middle school, or increased withdrawal.

My recommendations to the parents were to encourage Al to talk a lot at home without evaluating or judging--to just listen as much as possible. I told both parents that I thought Al needed touching. Al had made it very clear in the beginning of the year that he wanted to keep a large distance between himself and me. When I did come close, he moved away. Obviously, then, he did not want to be touched. This is a concern with children of this age. Normally, they do not mind a teacher coming within two or three feet of them. When a child consistently moves away when the teacher-student distance is four or five feet, and avoids getting anywhere near a teacher, this is a problem that needs attention. I encouraged his father, in particular, to spend a small amount of time daily just with Al doing fun things together--"Encourage him to express himself verbally, and listen to the feelings behind the words. Wrestle with him, put your arm around him, and laugh together."

All through the conference, I asked the parents to share their thoughts and ideas with me. Neither said very much, but both expressed appreciation for the progress that Al had made already. All in all, it was a pleasant experience, and, I think, a profitable one. The parents approved of the strategies I was using, and requested that I be Al's teacher for fifth grade.

As the fourth-grade year came to a close, an event took place which I believe was of great significance in Al's school life. Several children had requested a classroom meeting to discuss rearranging the room, particularly the location of the "quiet-reading platform," which was about seven feet long and four feet wide, stood about a foot and a half off the floor, and was adorned with an old ratty rug and three pillows. One of the children served as moderator, and I sat out of the circle and observed. Usually, we sit in a circle on the floor for classroom meetings, but for this one, the children sat in chairs. Al listened to the discussion for a considerable length of time in silence, as he usually did. After 20 minutes, Al raised his hand and made a suggestion about where to put the platform. When he made his suggestion, he stood up. No giggling, no self-consciousness. He was serious, calm, and supported his suggestion by summarizing the pros

and cons of how this choice would allow for maximum choices for desks, audio-center, and other furniture in the room. This child had not only been listening well, but thinking through how his and other suggestions would affect the entire room set-up. It was an excellent plan, and was finally adopted by an almost unanimous vote. The discussion continued, and Al contributed three or four more ideas as the children worked through the entire process of rearranging the room. Al was asserting himself with confidence and logic. What struck me most was the fact that he stood up to offer his plan. This action said, "I have confidence."

Fifth grade brought other significant changes. I had Al only for reading, writing, and social studies, as he studied math and science with my co-teacher. His artistic talent blossomed. Everything he did in art class was put on exhibit somewhere in the district. The art teacher talked with him at length about his work, and encouraged him to take as much art as possible in middle school and high school.

Al's art talent was also reinforced by his peers. The children considered him their artist. Whenever someone needed a drawing for his/her "student of the week" poster, a book they were putting together for Young Author's Day,[3] or an illustration for a story, he/she went to Al. He was very obliging. This high recognition and valuing of Al's talent by his peers did much to build Al's self-confidence and sense of worth.

Socially, Al began to branch out. He began making new friends, and entered the football and kickball games at recess. It was very clear that Al wanted to be an active and accepted part of the fifth-grade boys' group. This caused Burt much anguish, and he tried to prevent Al from accomplishing this social expansion. He put a lot of pressure on Al not to join in the games at recess. Then the two of them would proceed to cause trouble at recess through their immature, annoying behavior.

The immature behavior was my first priority with Al and Burt in fifth grade. I talked with both of them privately about it, first telling them what I saw them doing and how it affected their classmates.

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[3] In April, all fourth- and fifth-graders in the East Lansing Public School gather to hear a noted author of children's books speak, and to share, in small groups, books they have written, illustrated, and put together.

Then I asked them to evaluate this behavior. "Is it helping you?" At first, they'd laugh and say, "It's fun." I'd respond with something like, "Is it fun when the other children think you act like babies and that the stuff you do is dumb?"

As Al and Burt and I continued to discuss their immature behavior, neither said any longer, "It's fun," and, "We think it's funny." They began to say such things as, "Well, so-and-so does this and that to me all the time," so I enlarged the discussion to include the children they named. A lot of grievances (from as far back as three years) were aired and worked through. Once the past history was cleared out of the way, the boys were able to move forward and deal more effectively with the present. Al and Burt's recess behavior did improve.

Many of our classroom meetings deal with social problems pertinent to the children's lives. Al talked often and became totally involved in these discussions. He was eager to develop social skills and make new friends. I remember clearly a remark he made that was particularly insightful. We were talking about fighting--why people fight, feelings they experience, alternative ways to work out bad feelings that arise between people. I had asked the question, "How do you feel when you hit or kick or say hurtful things to another person?" Several children spoke, and then Al raised his hand. "I feel okay right afterwards, but later on when I'm lying in bed in the dark, I feel real bad and I wish I hadn't done it." Well, for a while, Al experienced the approach-avoid conflict at recess. He didn't want to reject his friend Burt; they had been close friends since kindergarten, and it was a solid, meaningful friendship to both. But Burt never joined the football games, and rarely played kickball.

One day, Burt persuaded Al not to play football, and the two of them caused trouble immediately. Children started coming to me complaining about this and that that Al and Burt were doing. I called the two boys over, and I spoke directly to Al, "Al," I said, "I just feel sad, really sad." He looked at me very seriously (we had a very good relationship by this time) and said, "Why?" "Well, you have been doing such terrific things this year--behaving maturely, working so hard and well at your studies, expanding yourself so beautifully--and now you're back to this nonsense. If Burt chooses to do this, that is his decision; but

I just hope that you are not going to let Burt or anyone else decide for you how you are going to behave. I know that Burt is your good friend, but maybe the time has come for you to say, 'I don't want to do this stuff anymore. I want to play football.'" Burt turned and walked away while I was saying this to Al. When I finished, Al just stood there hesitantly for a moment without speaking, and then he walked over and joined Burt again. The point of this was simply to encourage Al to reflect upon his progress and think about the fact that maybe Burt was making some decisions for him--poor decisions.

I don't know what happened for the rest of recess. I didn't pay any more attention to Al and Burt. Al continued to pursue his new friendships, and usually played in the football game during the early part of the year. But he was very torn. Burt did not want to lose Al as a friend, but he did not want to join the games either. Later, we found out why.

At the same time that I was working with Al, I was working with Burt. I discovered that Burt had "crowd phobia." In football, he was afraid of being tackled and having children pile on him, and he feared being caught in the crush of bodies when children lined up to kick in kickball. When the children became aware of these fears, they encouraged Burt to play, and offered a willingness to give him more space. As Burt became more willing to enter the games, one of Al's major problems decreased.

Al's writing steadily improved in fifth grade, as did his attitude. He began to enjoy writing, and voluntarily spent more and more time putting his thoughts and stories on paper. The violence theme gradually disappeared, and was replaced by imaginative stories, and some well-thought-out pieces based on personal experiences. He wrote a beautiful free-verse poem entitled "What a Friend Is," and I had it published in the school newsletter to parents. Gradually, he internalized the rules of our written language, and he began to care about correct spelling. The book he made for the Young Author's Conference, complete with beautiful hand-drawn original illustrations, was terrific. Al's mother made a special trip to school to tell me personally that she and her husband were amazed and thrilled by the writing Al brought home and by the book he had put together.

Being able to verbalize feelings was very important with Al. One

thing he told me he liked about school was the freedom to sit wherever and with whomever he liked. He thought this was "neat." Frequently Al and Burt sat together, and in the beginning they both socialized about 99% of the time. I told them they had the responsibility to get their work done. When things started to fall apart, I would say to both of them, "We have rules about getting work done, and you are not following them. Either you work it out, or we will work it out." They always said they would work it out. I was pretty patient with both of them, as I didn't expect them to stop socializing and do some serious work all at once.

Gradually, I got tougher. Occasionally, after giving them the opportunity to work out the problem of excessive socializing and little work, I'd walk over and quietly say, "Separate your desks, boys," nothing more. Burt would be verbally angry. Al would show that he was angry--with his red face and set jaw, he would shove the desk and chair and look as if he were about to cry. But he would say nothing. He swallowed his anger. I would then say, "When you can show me that you are getting your work done, then we'll talk about a plan so that you can sit together and follow the rules about work." We went through this process many times during fourth and fifth grade. Gradually, in fifth grade, Al was able to verbalize his angry feelings, and we then made rapid progress in working out mutually agreeable plans for work and socializing. The angry feelings had to be aired, and once dealt with, Al was free to approach confrontations more rationally.

Although I sensed that Al was suppressing a lot of anger as a fourth-grader, and that, combined with withdrawal, there was a barely-hidden hostility, I did not know what the hostility was directed toward. Perhaps it was directed toward school, but I suspect there was more to it than that. Afraid of acting out in school, Al released anger through drawing and writing for a long time. He released some anger through teasing and annoying his peers. He vicariously enjoyed reading about gangster activities and killings. I never felt any anger directed toward me personally; just a general anger, expressed, in the beginning, through an avoidance of responding to authority figures. I think suppressed anger was Al's major problem, and the failure image secondary, but real. Al and I never discussed his anger. The strategies I used to get him

talking--accepting his feelings about school and letting him know that I wanted to work with him to make school a better, happier place to be--valuing and praising his strengths; and encouraging him to express violent themes in drawing and writing (concentrating on the quality of the craftsmanship rather than the theme) worked. The need to explore the anger never really presented itself.

Somehow, Al worked out the anger by himself, perhaps not totally; there was no way for me to know. During the fifth grade, Al continued to be interested in gangsters, but his focus of interest shifted to F.B.I. men. Having two brothers who are F.B.I. agents, I talked to him about what my brothers' work was like. He began reading everything we could get hold of in the district on the F.B.I. After Al went to middle school, I occasionally read an article in the paper about F.B.I. activities. One article, in particular, told of a big F.B.I. bust of a major racketeer operation. I phoned Al to alert him to it. He was excited and thanked me. I wouldn't be at all surprised if Al joins a law enforcement group when he gets older--possibly the F.B.I.

Al and I developed a fine relationship during his fifth-grade year. He talked with me freely and spontaneously, approached me frequently for help or to show me what he was doing, and he returned my "hello" each morning with a "hi" and a smile. He didn't mind my coming close, and when he came to my desk, he stood very close to me. I could put my hand on his shoulder when we were talking, or around his waist when explaining something to him at my desk. He smiled a lot, and was always eager to tell me about interesting things that he was doing outside of school. We were good friends. Frequently, he hung around after school to talk or continue working. The classroom had become a very comfortable, happy place to be.

It was during Al's fifth-grade year that I discovered his ability to organize and manage. He set up, stocked, and managed the art center. Periodically, all of us cleaned up and reorganized the classroom. Al volunteered to take charge of these large-group work details, and he was terrific at it. When Al took charge of organizing something, I never had to give it another thought. He worked beautifully with his classmates, enlisting their suggestions, working out the plan of action with them, and then dividing up the tasks. He was a smooth, intelligent, and

diplomatic manager.

I learned about another side of Al through a classroom meeting in which power was discussed. In his chosen peer group of athletes, Al was recognized as the comedian--the one who made them laugh. This was a role he fulfilled out of my hearing and sight.

During a period of two years, Al changed from a silent, "I HATE SCHOOL" WFI child to a verbal, involved, successful student, and a socially accepted and admired member of his chosen peer group. In art and management skills, he excelled. On the Stanford Achievement Test, administered at the end of the fifth grade, he scored at grade level 8.2 in reading comprehension. He evidenced skill in rational problem-solving, and his writing gave strong evidence of an intelligent, thoughtful, creative, and sensitive mind. He was much happier in school, and more self-confident. It is hard to say whether or not he considered himself a successful persor and/or student, but he did behave like one. Perhaps the new success identity was somewhat fragile and tied to the environment from which it sprang. Al had come a long way in two years. He was then faced with the transition to the very large and unfamiliar middle school setting.

Several years have passed, and Al is doing well academically and socially in middle school.

Conclusion

The past few decades in our society might be characterized as the age of tumultuous accelerated change resulting in astounding technological advancement, and a flood of exciting new discoveries and advancement in many fields of knowledge. But while our intellectual advancements and achievements have been astounding we have not made great strides in our ability to get along with one another or our ability to achieve inner peace as confirmed by rampant crime, the increase in the use of alcohol and other drugs, the rapidly rising divorce rate, the high rate of child and spouse abuse, the problem of discipline in our schools, and the emerging problem of teacher stress and teacher burn-out. Adults and children alike live in an age of anxiety, tension, and self-doubt. Insecurity and fear, turmoil and strife are our companions as we go about the business of living.

As a parent and teacher I've tried to get to know and to understand the inner mind and state of today's youth and how they view the world around them. How do they see themselves fitting into society now and in the future? Where do they want to go? How can I help them get there? As great societal changes continually occur and the age gap between me and my students continually increases it is obvious that I and they will see the world from different perspectives and hold different values. It became imperative for me to change if I am to have an effective influence on youngsters as they seek to gain skills, self-confidence, and a belief in themselves that will enable them to succeed in school and in life.

It is my belief that children are significantly different today than they were when I attended public school and therefore new approaches arising predominantly from the field of psychology are demanded. New and varied life styles and cultural changes dictate the need for new strategies in the classroom. We are experiencing the pain of confusion, turmoil, and hardship as we struggle in the whirlpools of democratic evolution--learning to live and get along with one another as equals regardless of age, sex,

social or economic status, race, or cultural background. As we struggle to achieve the outward manifestations of freedom within our democrary I believe there is a great hunger for the highest and truest freedom of all--inner contentment in living, fulfillment of aspirations and spiritual peace.

The old autocratic ways of dealing with children are no longer effective, not in an age of true democracy. Dominance and submission are out dated. Today interpersonal and intergroup relationships pre-suppose a relationship of equals, recognition of a fundamental human equality in the classroom as elsewhere. Teachers can no longer afford to be autocratic in the classroom either for their own or their students well-being. They must become *influencers*. Rudolf Dreikurs (1971) speaks to this challenge in talking about how we can influence ourselves.

> The question of how we treat ourselves takes on a new dimension in this age of increasing democratization, when we no longer rely upon authorities to tell us what to do and to "make us toe the line." We know now that what the authorities told us to do was most often in their own self-interest. What most of us don't know, however, is that the *methods* by which they made us toe the line have utterly lost their effectiveness. Promises and threats, bribes and punishment, the chief control, techniques of aristocracy and of its heir-in-disguise, authoritarianasm, no longer work. To offer a good conduct metal to an equal is insulting; to punish him is outrageous. . .In an age when all except the privileged demand social equality, we refuse to accept the assumed superiority of those who would appoint themselves dispensers of lollipops and spankings.
>
> . . . we can no longer make anyone, even our children and ourselves, do anything to influence anyone successfully--our colleagues, our children, or ourselves--*we must change our influence methods to match the changing times* (italics mine). (pp. 14-15)

The inservices described in this book have helped me to learn new and effective influence methods and to achieve a great peace of mind. The strategies I've developed resulting from the integration of concepts and ideas learned from Glasser, T.E.T., and Focus inservices have

worked for me. They do take time and effort but I have given these joyfully knowing that they do indeed give children the strength, the skills, and the permission to move in the direction of becoming successful worthy persons in their own eyes and in the eyes of others.

What I have written is really an odyssey--my personal journey during the past seven years toward self-knowledge, self-actualization, and change replete with adventures of many kinds, involving the spectrum of emotions from pain to joy. Change I did--and there was pain, uncertainty, and risk involved in this. However, through change and the effort it required came a new and fuller life--greater confidence, greater acceptance of myself and others, openness to new ideas and new ways of approaching conflict situations, inner peace, and joy in teaching, parenting, and involvement with life which still amazes me. Perhaps the most satisfying and enjoyable learning period of my life occurred because I sensed that I was not as in touch with today's youth as I wanted to be--in fact, I was sufficiently uneasy and dissatisfied to obey the inner voice which said, "Get moving, find out why, and then do something about it!" I am happy I did.

One of the things I've told my audiences during inservices which always was received with varying degrees of disbelief was, "Since applying the principles and ideas learned from Glasser, T.E.T, and Focus I look forward to and enjoy every day in school and no longer take problems home with me." But it is true. I don't worry nearly as much as I used to, experience little upsets or anxiety in school, and generally have a lot of fun.

My family life too has been infinitely enriched. My teenage children and I like and respect one another; we laugh a lot, talk openly and freely, share responsibilities, and generally have warm, friendly feelings toward each other. I don't want to give the false impression that we don't have problems. We do. But we've learned and are still learning how to resolve conflicts so that close loving relationships are maintained and to share our upsets confident that they will be taken seriously and received in an accepting, caring, supportive atmosphere.

Glasser, Gordon, and the Focus consultants have given me and the children not a kit or a program but a way of living, a way of functioning within the classroom and in the family unit as we go about the acquisiton of intellectual, physical and interpersonal skills, and self-esteem.

I like to think that I have been able to give the children in my classes, as well as my own children, some important understandings and skills, learned through participation in the inservices described in this book, that will benefit them and help them to feel successful all their lives. I am also aware that I have received more than I've given.

I hope that the ideas and strategies herein presented have given you something of value that you can use profitably in your own creative way. If your life becomes better or richer in some way, this book will have been worth the many hours and the thinking that went into its creation.

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